AQUA Knight

BY THE ACCLAIMED CREATOR OF BATTLE ANGEL ALITA!

Story and Art by

Yukito Kishiro

AQUA
Knight
Volume 2
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AQUA KNIGHT Vol. 2

This volume contains Aqua Knight, Part Two #1 through Aqua Knight, Part Two # 5 in their entirety.

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Editor/Annette Roman

Director of Sales & Marketing/Dallas Middaugh
Editor-in-Chief/Hyoe Narita
Publisher/Seiji Horibuchi

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First published in Japan in 1998 by
SHUEISHA, Inc., Tokyo

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Printed in Canada

THE TALE THUS FAR

On a remote island on a mystical aqueous world, a naive young boy named Ashika lived a tranquil life with his father, Arrabarus the lighthouse keeper, and Niselle, a mysterious sphere of light that Ashika takes to be his mother.

One day, the boy discovered an unusual sunken treasure—a high-tech suit of underwater armor! But what was even more unusual was the beautiful female warrior trapped inside!

In return for saving her life, Aqua Knight Ruliya offered to grant Ashika his heart's desire. To her surprise, he wished to become an Aqua Knight, just like her!

But before Ashika could begin his duties as Ruliya's squire, both were sorely tested. Ashika attempted to prove his mettle by charging a voracious legendary water dragon, and Arrabarus challenged Ruliya to a duel in full battle armor to prove herself worthy to be his son's mentor.

Things really got out of hand, however, with the arrival of nefarious inventor Alcantara and the bizarre crew of his air/watership Zykey, Zycrow, and Gygro. Now Arrabarus has been escorted to the underworld, Ruliya has received the gift of a demon-conjuring blade named "Muertogara"; and Alcantara has kidnapped hapless Ashika and the precious light.

ASHIKA

NISELLE

RULIYA

ALCANTARA

ZYKEY

ZYCROW

GYGRO

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THE
BITTER
TRIALS OF
DESIRE
ACT ONE

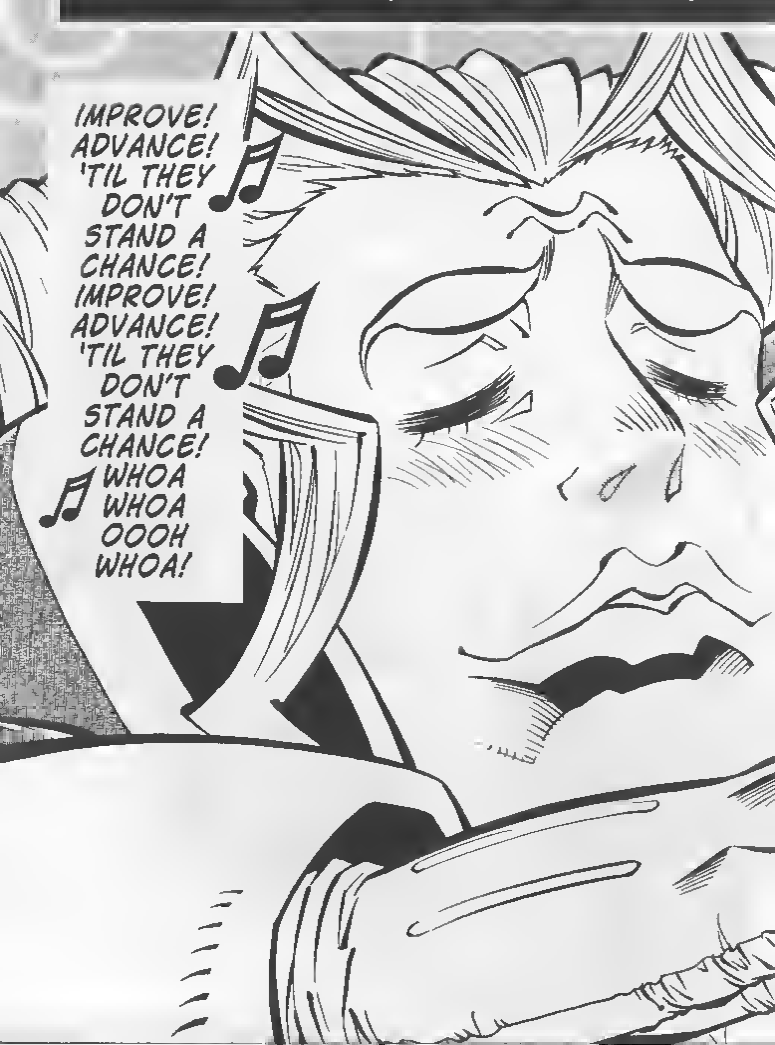
SONG OF ALCANTARA, VERSE ONE
CONQUER! INVADE! ALL IN ONE MIGHTY RAID! CONQUER! INVADE! ALL IN ONE MIGHTY RAID!
WHOA WHOA OOOH WHOA!

WHOA WHOA OOOH WHOA!
GO! THE DICTATOR WITH COMPASS IN HAND! GO! AND BEND THE RULES THAT DEITIES PLANNED! GO! HENCHMEN AWAIT YOUR EVERY COMMAND!
NONE CAN DEFEAT ME--YOW!-- THAT'S WHAT MY CLAIM IS! PRAISE ALCANTARA-- 'CAUSE THAT'S WHAT MY NAME IS!

SONG OF ALCANTARA, VERSE TWO
RESEARCH! EXPLORE! KNOWLEDGE WINS US THE WAR! RESEARCH! EXPLORE! KNOWLEDGE WINS US THE WAR!
WHOA WHOA OOOH WHOA!

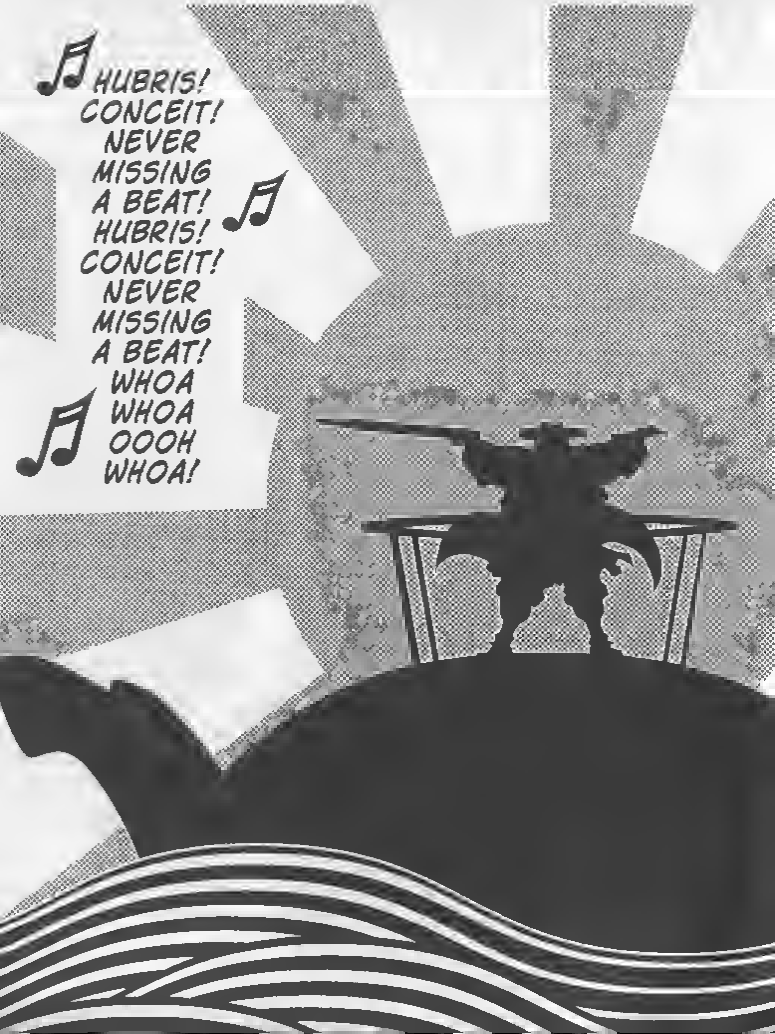
GO! THE SCIENTIST WHOSE MIND IS THE BEST! GO! AND PUT THE LAWS OF GOD TO THE TEST!
GO! YOUR PERFECT PRINCIPLES CANNOT REST!
WHOA WHOA OOOH WHOA!
NONE CAN OUTBRAIN ME--OOOH!-- THAT'S WHAT MY GAME IS! PRAISE ALCANTARA-- 'CAUSE THAT'S WHAT MY NAME IS!

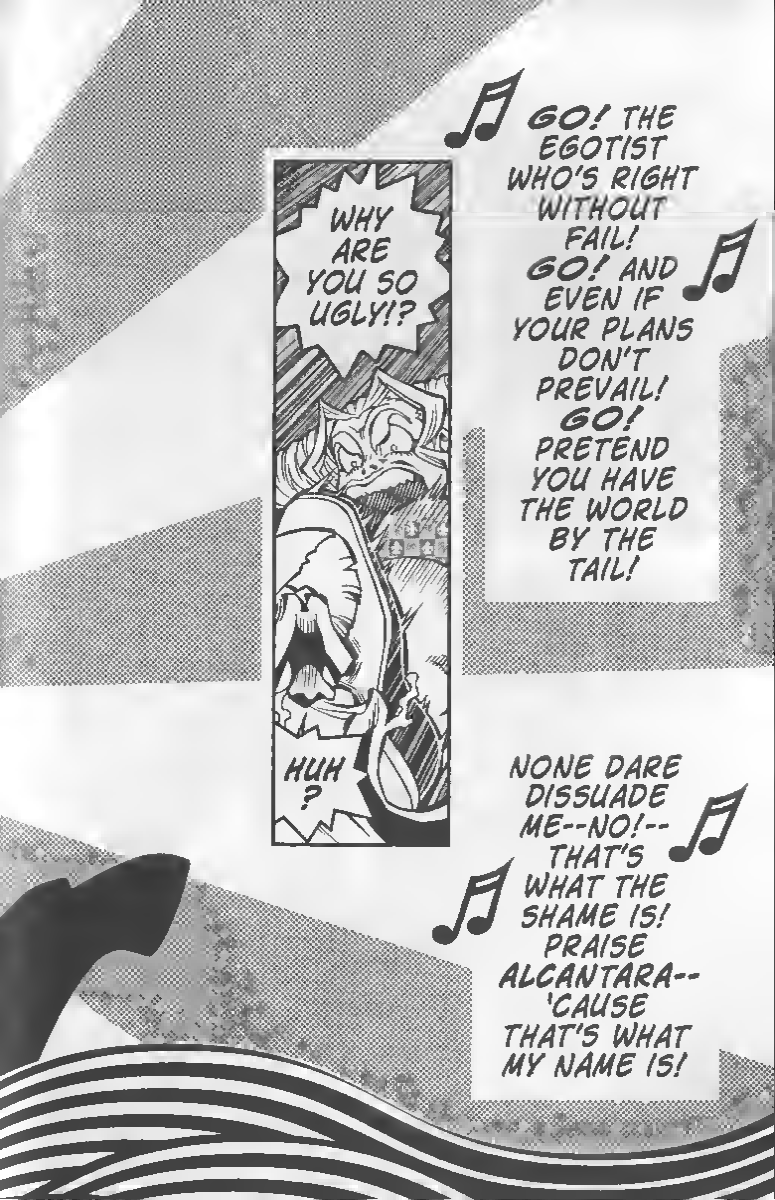
SONG OF ALCANTARA, VERSE THREE



GO! THE DEMIGOD WITH GLORY IN MIND!
GO! AND SHOW THEM THAT YOU'RE ONE OF A KIND!
GO! TAKE ON THE TOUGHEST CHALLENGE YOU FIND!
OOOH OOOH OOOH OOOH!
NONE WILL FORGET ME--YEAH!-- THAT'S HOW MY FAME IS! PRAISE ALCANTARA-- 'CAUSE THAT'S WHAT MY NAME IS!

SONG OF ALCANTARA, VERSE FOUR




GO! THE EGOTIST WHO'S RIGHT WITHOUT FAIL!
GO! AND EVEN IF YOUR PLANS DON'T PREVAIL!
GO! PRETEND YOU HAVE THE WORLD BY THE TAIL!
WHY ARE YOU SO UGLY!?
HUH ?
NONE DARE DISSUADE ME--NO!--
THAT'S WHAT THE SHAME IS!
PRAISE ALCANTARA--
'CAUSE THAT'S WHAT MY NAME IS!

SCENE ONE: ALCANTARA'S ELEGANT AWAKENING

BLEEEP
POOPOOPOOM!
MORNING-FANFARE MACHINE
BOING
FORCED-AWAKENING UNIT (ACTIVATED)
FWMP
GAH?
SWIP
TWOK
FWING
SHWUP
POOF
MRPH...
HOT TOWEL

SNAP
KA-CHANG
SHWRR WRR
FWWK
PSSSH
HAIR-SETTING MACHINE
ZWP
ZWP
GAH!
ZWP
AUTO-SHAVING UNIT
REEE EEE
(WITH AUTO-BRUSHING ATTACHMENT)
TIP TIP TIP TIP TIP
ALCANTARA'S COMPASS COLLECTION
TUP
ALCANTARA LAUNCH TUBE
SWEEE

PA
WOOSH
TAK
GOOD MORNING, ALL!
I WOKE UP PERFECTLY, IF I DO SAY SO MYSELF!
WANDERING GENIUS
ALCANTARA
AN INVENTOR FROM ANOTHER LAND WHO ASPIRES TO PERFECTION IN ALL THINGS AGE 35

SCENE TWO: ALCANTARA'S ELEGANT BREAKFAST

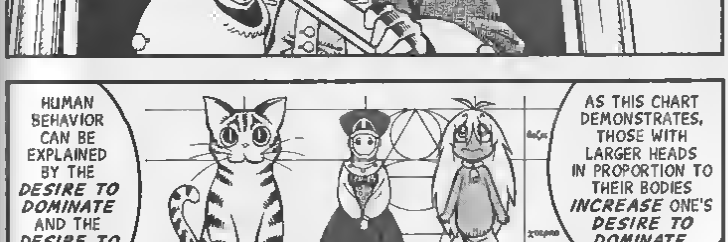
RIP
KRTNK
MMM...
DEE-LISH!
ZYCROW, YOU'VE BROUGHT THE TASTE OF OUR HOMELAND TO THIS SAVAGE OUTPOST!
I, ZYCROW, CANNOT EXPRESS THE HONOR I FEEL AT YOUR KIND WORDS, SIRE..
EEP!
HENCHMAN ZYCROW
A MASTER OF THE CULINARY ARTS, MACHINERY, AND COMBAT (BUT OTHERWISE QUITE HORRIBLE)

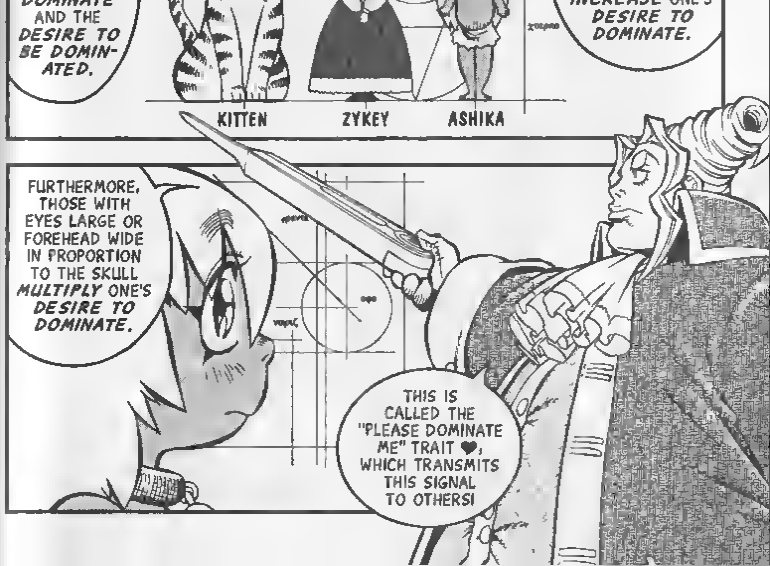
UUUH...
ASHIKA
A YOUNG BOY ABDUCTED FROM LIGHTHOUSE ISLAND.
OH, THIS IS SO TASTY! A SHEER DELIGHT!
-:GULP:-
HOT MUSTARD
HERE!
FWOOO
YAH!
WAAA HA HA HA!
AIEE EEE EEE!
SILLY BOY...
POOR ASHIKA...
AAAGH! YAAH!
HEHCHWOMAH ZYKEY
SHE SERVES ALCANTARA FOR PERSONAL REASONS. AGE 19.

SINCE HIS CAPTURE BY ALCANTARA, ASHIKA HAS ENDURED SUCH TORMENTS EVERY DAY.
OOOH...
...HE'S SOOO EVIL...
WAAA HA HA HA HA HA!
FWAP
©TSUTOMU
EH? ZYKEY, WHY ARE YOU CRYING?
IT'S JUST THAT...
MASTER AL, WH-WHY DO YOU PICK ON THOSE WEAKER THAN YOU?
HMM.
AN EXCELLENT QUESTION.

SCENE THREE: ALCANTARA'S ELEGANT LECTURE

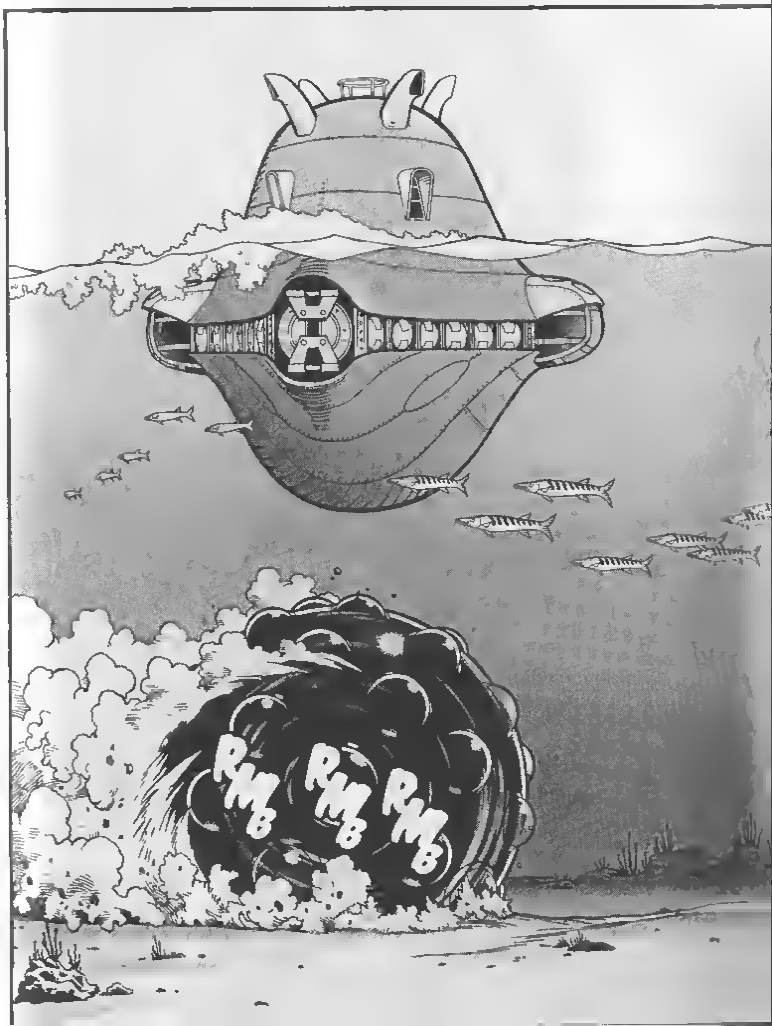
TODAY I WILL REVIEW THE FUNDAMENTAL DOCTRINE OF ALCANTARAN PSYCHOLOGY, THE *DOMINATION THEORY.*
AS YOU KNOW, ALCANTARAN PSYCHOLOGY IS A STUDY OF MY OWN INVENTION WHICH EXPLAINS THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF HUMAN BEHAVIOR!

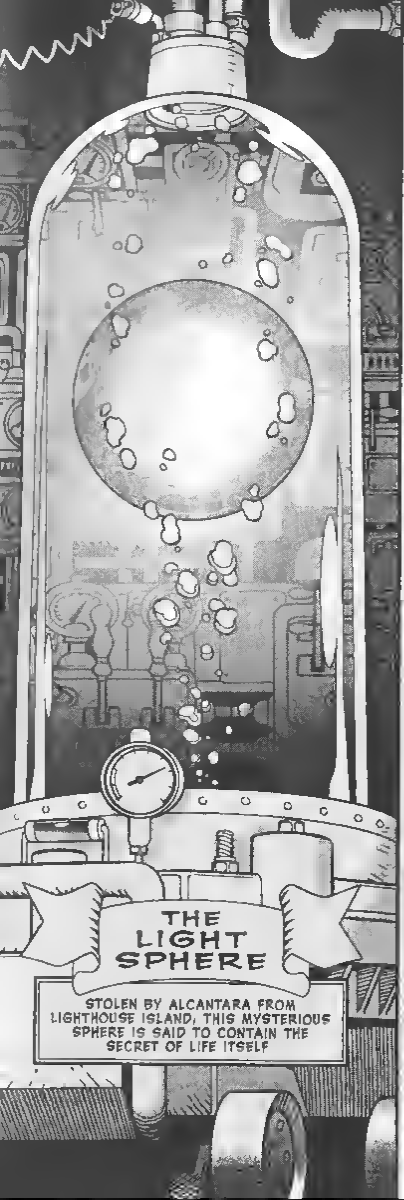

HUMAN BEHAVIOR CAN BE EXPLAINED BY THE *DESIRE TO DOMINATE* AND THE *DESIRE TO BE DOMINATED.*
KITTEN
ZYKEY
ASHIKA
AS THIS CHART DEMONSTRATES, THOSE WITH LARGER HEADS IN PROPORTION TO THEIR BODIES *INCREASE* ONE'S *DESIRE TO DOMINATE.*

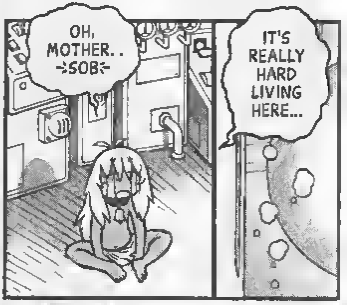

FURTHERMORE, THOSE WITH EYES LARGE OR FOREHEAD WIDE IN PROPORTION TO THE SKULL *MULTIPLY* ONE'S *DESIRE TO DOMINATE.*
THIS IS CALLED THE "PLEASE DOMINATE ME" TRAIT ♥, WHICH TRANSMITS THIS SIGNAL TO OTHERS!

ON THE OTHER HAND..
.THOSE WITH DEAD, FISH-LIKE EYES, PROTRUDING BROWS, AND A SMALL FOREHEAD EXPAND THE DESIRE TO KICK.
ALL OF THIS AFFECTS THOSE WITH THE DESIRE TO DOMINATE!
SKRAK
GYA AAA AAA AH!
NNGH...
I, ZYCROW, FIND PLEASURE IN LICKING MY MASTER'S BOOT
SLRRRP
GOOD.
THUS ENDS TODAY'S LECTURE!
THE WORD "LOVE" ISN'T IN MASTER AL'S DICTIONARY IS IT?
I'M HUNGRY

SCENE FOUR: THE MOTHERING LIGHT SPHERE




THE LIGHT SPHERE
STOLEN BY ALCANTARA FROM LIGHTHOUSE ISLAND, THIS MYSTERIOUS SPHERE IS SAID TO CONTAIN THE SECRET OF LIFE ITSELF


OH, MOTHER.. -SOB-
IT'S REALLY HARD LIVING HERE...

I'M WORRIED ABOUT FATHER-- HE GOT ALL SHRIVELED UP...
WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN TO ME NOW...?

SO THERE YOU ARE, ASHIKA
KUK
NOW, DON'T TELL MASTER AL..

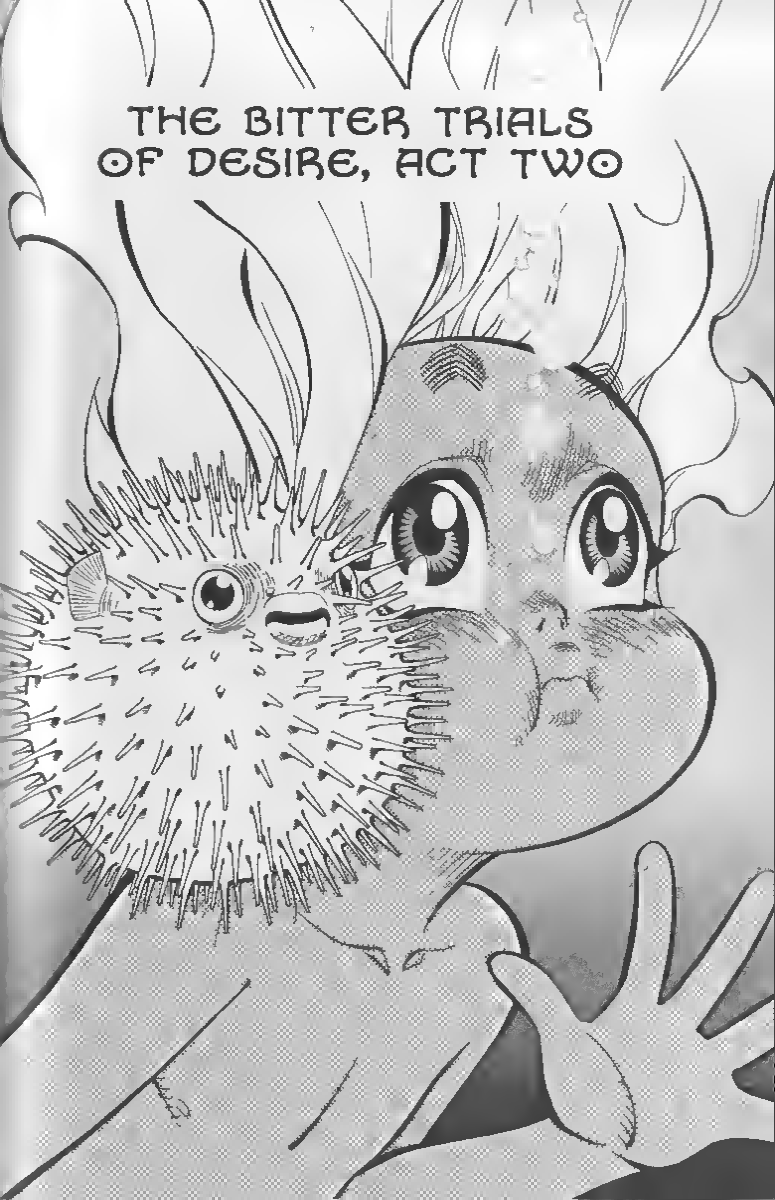
YAH!
IS THIS FOOD!?
IT'S VERY GOOD!
ASHIKA, TAKE THE CANDLES OFF FIRST!
GLURP
ZYKEY IS NICE TO ME...
I REALLY LIKE YOU, ZYKEY!
OH, ASHIKA...
WHY DO YOU CALL THIS SPHERE "MOTHER"?
BECAUSE SHE *IS* MY MOTHER
BUT PEOPLE ARE BORN FROM *WOMEN*, ASHIKA.
IS THAT *TRUE*, MOTHER!?
.....

ZYKEY FELT SORRY FOR ASHIKA, WHO DID NOT KNOW HIS MOTHER.
RIP
RIP
DON'T CRY, ZYKEY! LET'S *DANCE* INSTEAD!
I'M *SURE* LADY RULIYA WILL RESCUE US!
LADY RULIYA?
YES! SHE'S A *SHINY KNIGHT* WHO'S *VERY* IMPORTANT!
I'M LADY RULIYA'S *SQUIRE*--SO I *KNOW* SHE'LL COME SAVE ME!
FEH! IN YOUR DREAMS, KID.
TMP
AH!

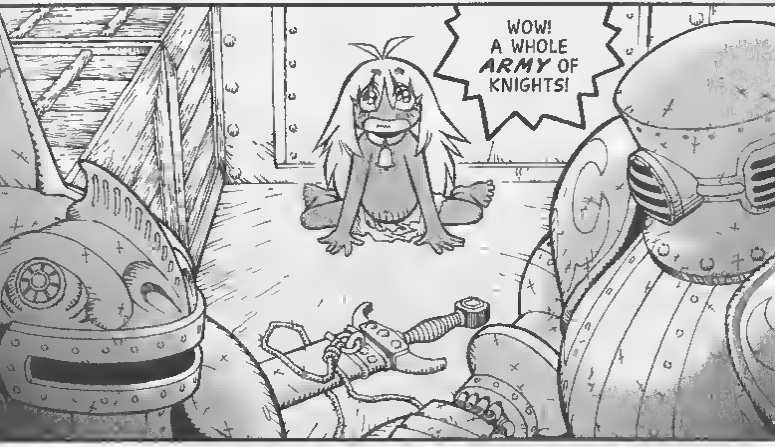
SLAM
KLIK
OW. IT HURTS...
DAMN THAT ALCANTARA FOR KICKING ME SO HARD...
HEH HEH HEH
WHAT DO YOU WANT, ZYCROW?
KEHEH!
WHAT DO YOU THINK...?
I PLAN TO VENT MY RAGE ON THIS PUNY KID, OF COURSE!
RUN, ASHIKA! RUN!
AIEE EEEE EEE!

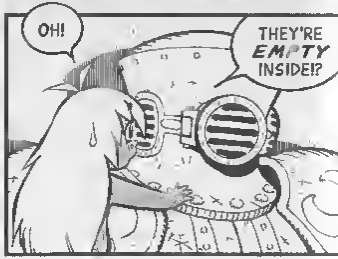
GNNSH
HMM...?
DON'T YOU GET AN ATTITUDE WITH ME, JUST BECAUSE ALCANTARA LIKES YOU A LITTLE BIT...
.. DOLL GIRL!
HEH HEH!
AH!
THAT DAMN KID!
FWMP
SHWP
NO! NO! NO!
I DON'T LIKE IT HERE ANYMORE!
LADY RULIYA!
BONK
MM
COME AND SAVE ME!
KONK
SHOOM
YEE EE!
NN NH...
!?

A ROOM FULL OF KNIGHTS !?


THE BITTER TRIALS
OF DESIRE, ACT TWO

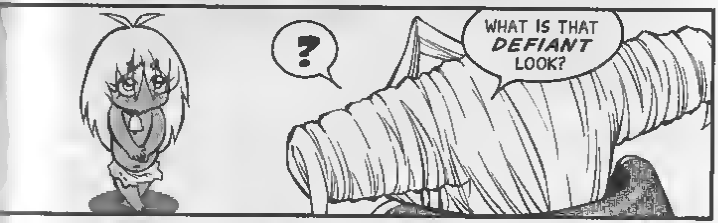
SCENE FIVE: ASHIKA'S HEAD SPINS



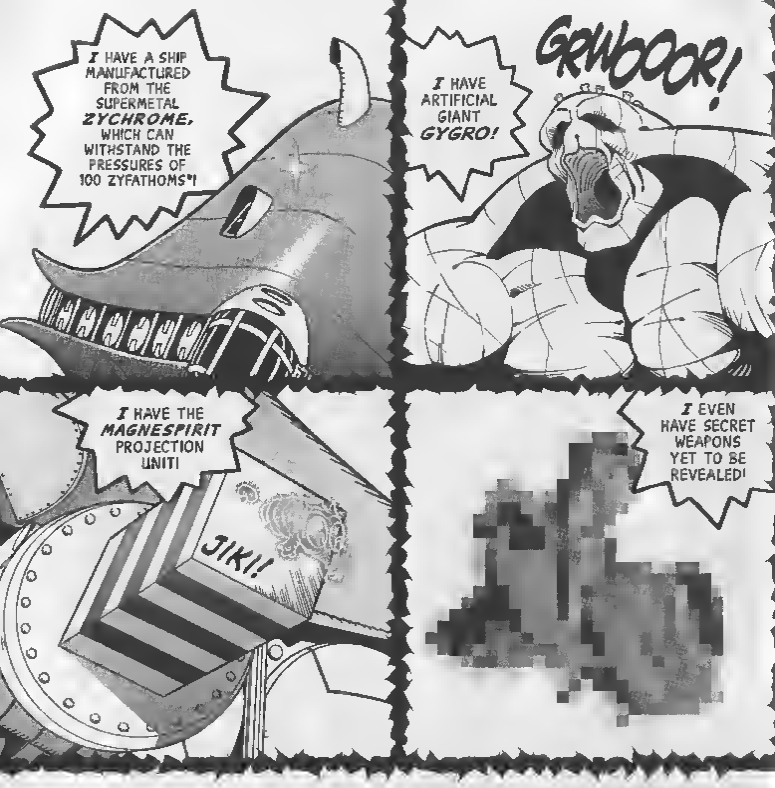


YOU *ARE* A SILLY BOY
DO YOU *REALLY* HATE LIVING HERE SO?
AIYEE EEEE!

DO YOU *MISS* YOUR ISLAND? EATING AND DRINKING WHENEVER YOU WANT, RUNNING AROUND WITH YOUR PRIVATES EXPOSED?
DO YOU *MISS* LIVING LIKE SOME KIND OF *WILD ANIMAL!?*
HERE, YOU WILL WEAR PANTS *HERE,* YOU WILL LIVE LIFE A *MINUTE* AT A TIME, FOREVER CHASED BY THE *CLOCK.*
THAT IS A *CIVILIZED* LIFE. *THAT* IS HOW I WILL RAISE YOU!


?
WHAT IS THAT *DEFIANT* LOOK?

OH, *I* KNOW WHAT YOU'RE WAITING FOR...
YOU'RE HOPING THAT *KNIGHT* OF YOURS WILL COME TO YOUR AID-- DEFEAT *ME* AND RESCUE *YOU.* ISN'T THAT RIGHT?
WELL...


I HAVE A SHIP MANUFACTURED FROM THE SUPERMETAL ZYCHROME, WHICH CAN WITHSTAND THE PRESSURES OF 100 ZYFATHOMS*!
I HAVE ARTIFICIAL GIANT GYGRO!
GRWOOOR!
I HAVE THE MAGNESPIRIT PROJECTION UNIT!
JIKI!
I EVEN HAVE SECRET WEAPONS YET TO BE REVEALED!

IT HAS BEEN A YEAR SINCE I CAME TO MARMUNDO!
SEVERAL OF YOUR KNIGHTS HAVE FOOLISHLY CHALLENGED ME--BUT MY TECHNOLOGY HAS DEFEATED THEM ALL!

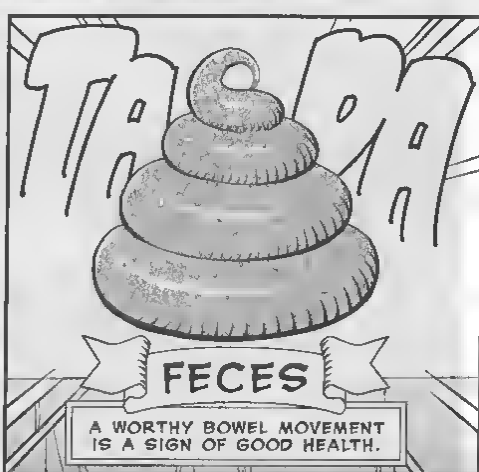
*ZYFATHOM: A UNIT FOR MEASURING LENGTH FROM ALCANTARA'S HOMELAND
1 ZYFATHOM EQUALS 183 CENTIMETERS, THUS 100 ZYFATHOMS EQUALS 183 METERS

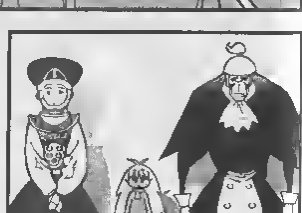
THIS ROOM IS WHERE I KEEP MY TROPHIES!
I, ALCANTARA, CANNOT BE DEFEATED BY BARBARIANS THAT KNOW ONLY SPEARS AND SWORDS!
WAHA HAHA!
AND I SHALL ADD THE ARMOR OF YOUR KNIGHT TO THIS ROOM AS WELL!

NOOO! KNIGHTS CAN'T BEAT HIM?
WHAT AM I GOING TO DO!?

LADY RULIYA
.. DON'T TRY TO SAVE ME!
OH NOOOO

SCENE SIX: BEING FLUSHED IS ALSO A PART OF LIFE



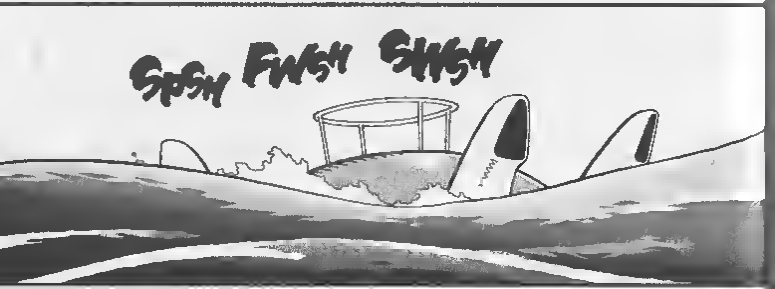


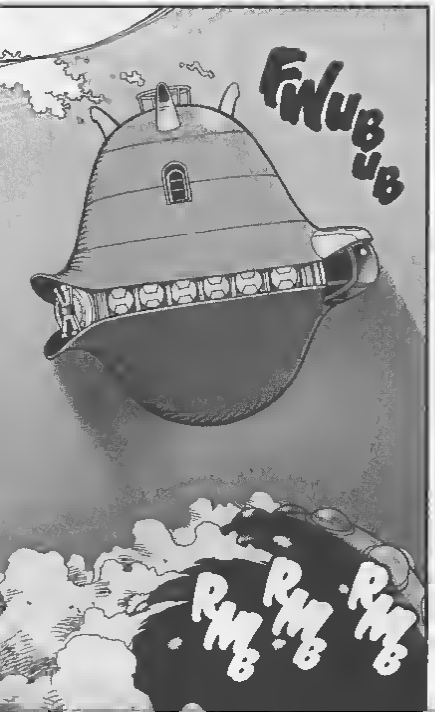
WAS THIS YOUR DOING!?
SKRAK
NO. IT WASN'T, SIRE!
I TRY TO IGNORE IT, BUT I CAN'T!
IT HAS TOO MUCH PRESENCE!
ITS ODOR...
ITS COLOR...
ITS SHAPE...
AND THE CURL HERE!
IT REFUSES TO BE IGNORED!
ITS VERY PRESENCE VOIDS ALL LAWS AND LOGIC! A PRODUCT OF PURE DEFIANCE TOWARD ORDER!
IT IS VIOLENCE!
IT IS TERRORISM!
FECAL TERRORISM!
TOILET TRAINING!
YES, SIRE!
FWSH

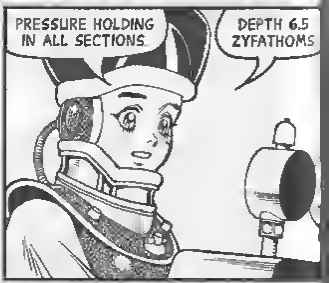
KA
TNK
ALCANTARA-DESIGNED
FLUSH TOILET
DO YOUR BUSINESS HERE, OKAY?
OHHHH! I THOUGHT THIS WAS A DRINKING POOL.
THEN USE THIS BRUSH TO CLEAN...
YAH!
PLPLP
?
CHNK
AAAH! ASHIKA!
SPOOSH
OH, NO!
SHWSH
-GLUB-
ASHIKA BEGAN TO THINK
SPLSH
WHERE AM I GOING?
GAHAAA
I KNOW!

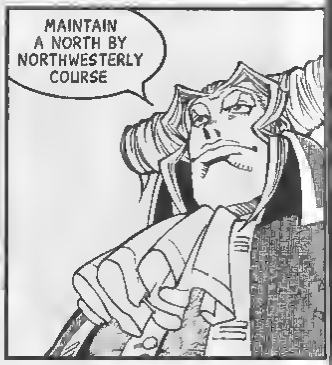
MAYBE THIS LEADS TO THE SEA! I CAN GET OUT!
HALT!
!
BOOSH
ARE YOU HUMAN OR FECES?
ROBO-PIG
A ROBOT THAT GUARDS THE SHIP'S WASTE-DISPOSAL GATE
UH ..
I'M... I'M A...
...A PIECE OF FECES!
FOOL! FECES CAN'T TALK!
YEEEEE! OH, NO!
WHOOP
GO FREE-- FOR THE BOTH OF US..
BYE-BYE!
AAAH!
GULP

SCENE SEVEN: LIKE SAND THROUGH THE HOURGLASS









THE ZYFORT HAS INADEQUATE FACILITIES TO INITIATE A *PROPER* STUDY OF THE LIGHT SPHERE.
WE MUST HEAD NORTH TO *ZYBASE*, MY SECRET HEADQUARTERS, IN ORDER TO REVEAL THE SECRETS OF THE SPHERE!
WAH HA HA...
...HA HA HAAA!
HEH HEH
SHAH
.....
UM... WHAT IS *THIS* THING?
!!!

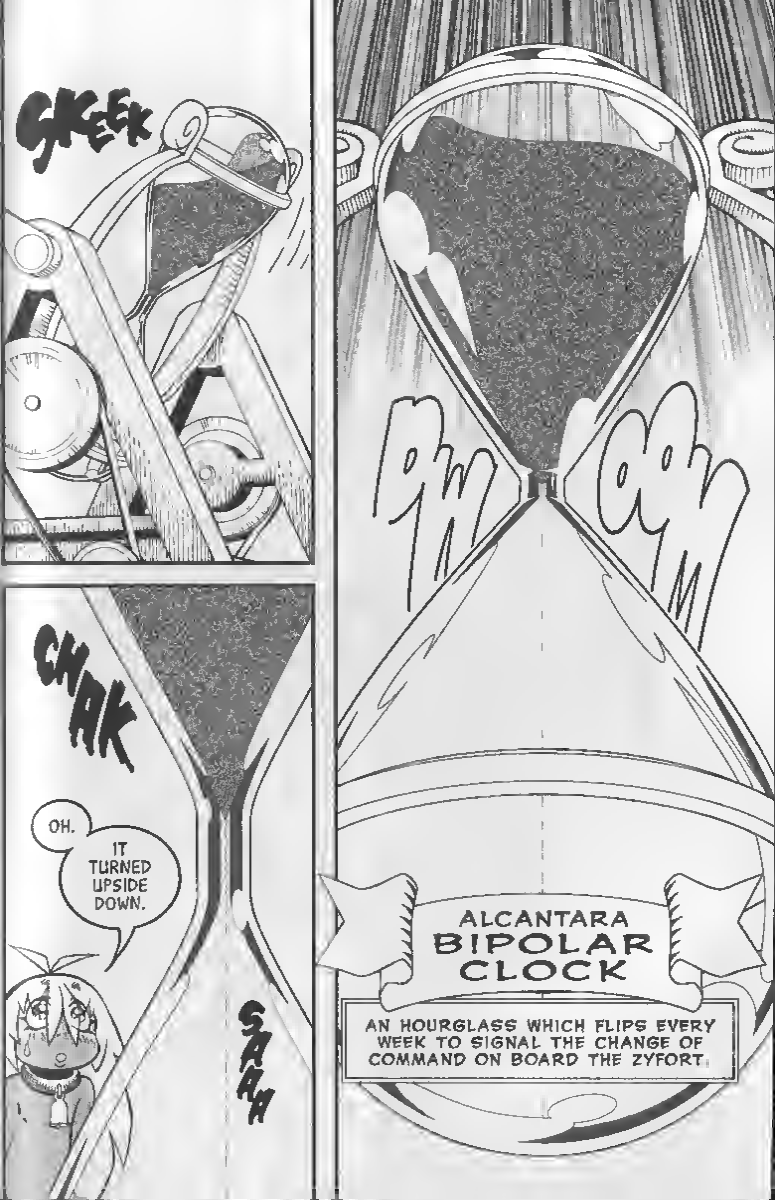
!?
?
?
HEH.
HEH.
HEH HEH.
GYA HAHA HAHA HAA!
BOOM
BOOM
WHAT'S GOING ON?
WHY ARE THEY ALL ACTING FUNNY?

I AM ALCANTARA THE PERFECT!
GYEE HEE HEE HEE HEEE HEEEEEE!
SHAW
RIP
HEE--

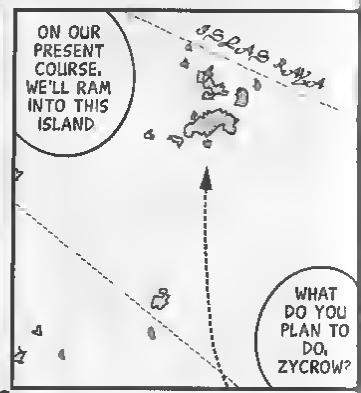
MASTER AL!
KA-TONK
UNGH HHHH...
SHWUU
NO— I'M— I'M NOT..
NOT... PERFECT AT... ALL...
RP

SINCE THE DAY OF MY BIRTH .. I'VE NEVER MANAGED TO BE PERFECT AT ANYTHING. NOT ONCE...
I'VE NO RIGHT... TO CLAIM THAT I'M... PERFECT...
IT CAN'T BE!
YAAAAH!
I WON'T ACCEPT IT! I WON'T!
HEH HEH HEH!
HEE HEE HEEE...
THE MOMENT I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR!
WOOOM

IT'S MY TURN NOW!
I, ZYCROW, AM NOW IN CHARGE OF ZYFORT!
HEE HEE!
SHWAK SHWAK SHWAK
WAH AAH!
SO, ALCANTARA... YOU'VE BEEN MISTREATING ME--AS USUAL!
WH-WHAT'S GOING ON?
POOR MASTER AL...
WAH AAH!


GIGEK
CHAK
OH.
IT TURNED UPSIDE DOWN.
SHAH
POM
COM
ALCANTARA
BIPOLAR
CLOCK
AN HOURGLASS WHICH FLIPS EVERY WEEK TO SIGNAL THE CHANGE OF COMMAND ON BOARD THE ZYFORT.

SCENE EIGHT: ZYFORT'S GREATEST THREAT



OH, I CAN'T BE BOTHERED TO THINK. HERE
FWAP
GREAT! HEAD TO THE RIGHT!
O-O-OKAY..
HOWEVER .
.. ZYCROW'S NEW COURSE STEERS DIRECTLY INTO THE DEMONIC SEA.
OOOH! IT'S REALLY CREEPY OUT THERE

EVERYTHING IN THIS AREA LOOKS ABNORMALLY LARGE...
BLINK
WAA AAH!
FWSSH
I'M SCARED!
ZYCROW, PERHAPS WE SHOULD HEAD BACK...
I THOUGHT I TOLD YOU TO CALL ME MASTER ZYCROW!
GYAA AAAH!
FWUNK

SOME-
THING'S
TAKEN AHOLD
OF THE
SHIP!
GWOMP

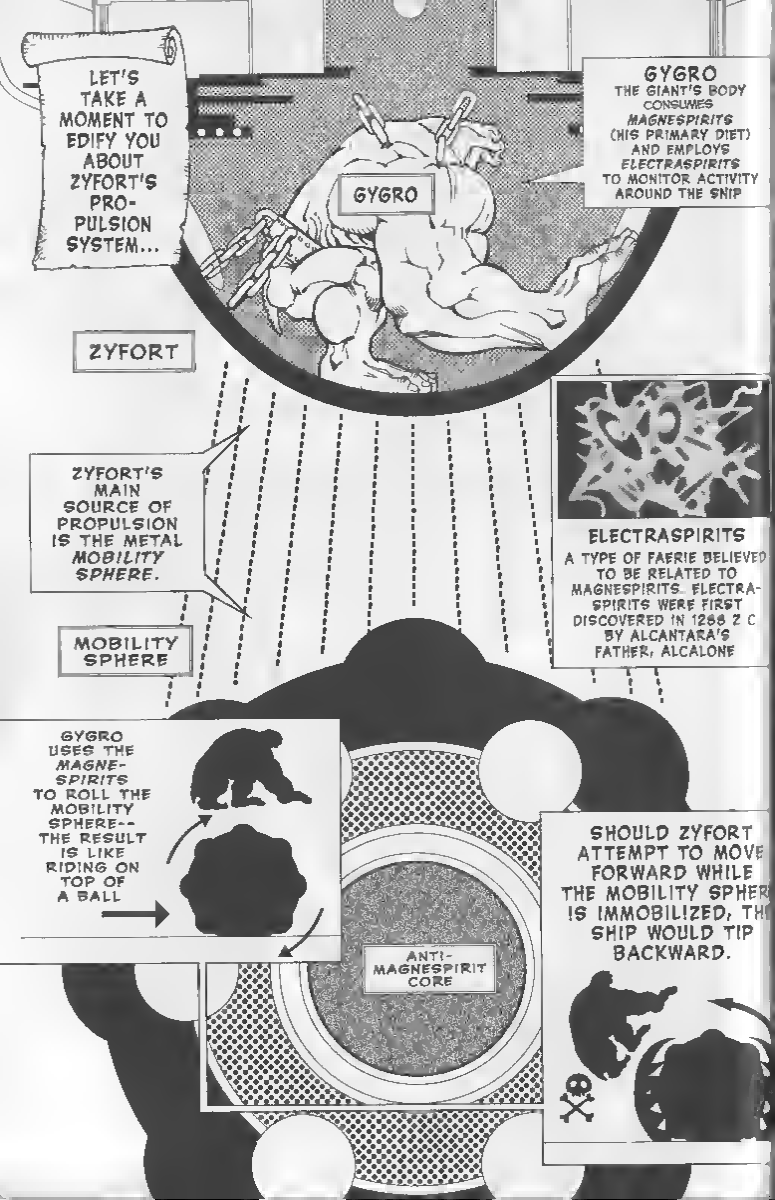
THE
BITTER TRIALS
OF DESIRE,
ACT THREE

GRRRR
YAA AAAA AAAH!
RWMMM
RRRR
(ROAR FOR DRAMATIC EFFECT.)
BOBBIT WORM
(EUNICE SP.)
THE BOBBIT WORM (CLASS POLYCHAETA) IS USUALLY ONLY 2 TO 10 CM IN DIAMETER AND 4 TO 9 METERS IN LENGTH, FOUND MOSTLY IN WARM CLIMATES; IT GRABS PASSING PREY IN ITS FANGS AND DRAGS IT INTO ITS LAIR TO CONSUME IT

DO SOME-THING, ZYCROW!
AAAAH! DON'T EXPECT ANYTHING FROM ME!
I KNEW I DIDN'T STAND A CHANCE!
EVERY DECISION I'VE MADE SINCE THE DAY I WAS BORN HAS WORKED AGAINST ME!
BUT IT'S NOT MY FAULT THIS TIME!
I BLAME THIS!
TCH TCH
THE COMPASS MADE ME DO IT!
DAMN YOU!
KANG
GYAH!
SPLOC

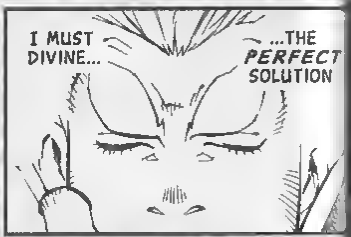
KARAM
I WISH I COULD JUST FADE AWAY...
MMB MMB
FWAASSH
FSH FSH
AH...
AAA AHH...
IT--IT'S WARMING MY SOUL...
ZZZZ

RWMM GRRR
WE'RE BEING PULLED UNDER!
WHAT IS GYGRO DOING!?
GRO RWRR RRR!
ZAKKA ZAK
BIO-ENGINE
GYGRO
A GENTLE GIANT SEALED IN ZYFORT'S HULL, WHERE IT FUNCTIONS AS AN ORGANIC ENGINE TWO YEARS OLD


LET'S TAKE A MOMENT TO EDIFY YOU ABOUT ZYFORT'S PRO-PULSION SYSTEM...
GYGRO
GYGRO THE GIANT'S BODY CONSUMES MAGNESPIRITS (HIS PRIMARY DIET) AND EMPLOYS ELECTRASPIRITS TO MONITOR ACTIVITY AROUND THE SHIP
ZYFORT
ZYFORT'S MAIN SOURCE OF PROPULSION IS THE METAL MOBILITY SPHERE.
ELECTRASPIRITS
A TYPE OF FAERIE BELIEVED TO BE RELATED TO MAGNESPIRITS. ELECTRA-SPIRITS WERE FIRST DISCOVERED IN 1268 Z.C. BY ALCANTARA'S FATHER, ALCALONE
MOBILITY SPHERE
GYGRO USES THE MAGNE-SPIRITS TO ROLL THE MOBILITY SPHERE-- THE RESULT IS LIKE RIDING ON TOP OF A BALL
ANTI-MAGNESPIRIT CORE
SHOULD ZYFORT ATTEMPT TO MOVE FORWARD WHILE THE MOBILITY SPHERE IS IMMOBILIZED, THE SHIP WOULD TIP BACKWARD.

SO ALL GYGRO CAN DO IS KEEP THE SHIP STEADY!
DO NOT PANIC!
WHO--!?
TAH DAAAA
MASTER ALI?
BUT HIS TURN ISN'T FOR FOUR MORE DAYS!
I'M NOT SURE WHY, BUT AFTER BATHING IN THE GLOW OF THE LIGHT SPHERE, I FEEL JUST FINE!
NOW THAT I HAVE RETURNED, WE SHALL PERSEVERE!
FOR I, ALCANTARA, HAVE NEVER FAILED TO OVERCOME ADVERSITY!

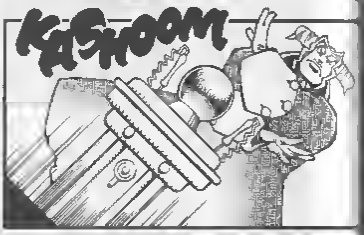
SCENE NINE: THE ALCANTARA STEP!

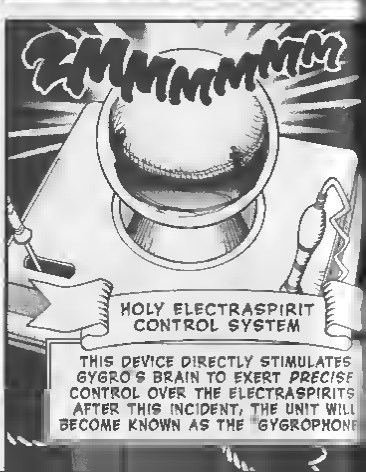


KYAA AAAH!
BWONNG
M-M-MASTER!
ZING
AH!
I SEE IT! YES!

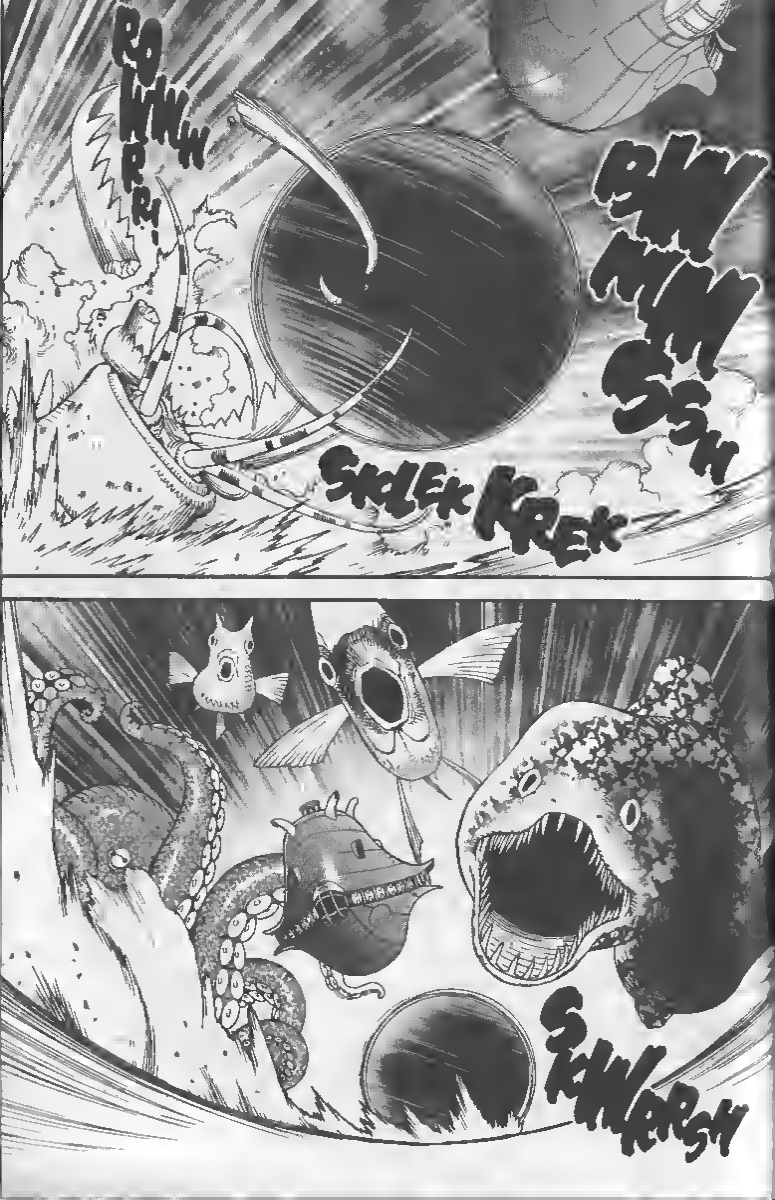
I SEE THE PATH I MUST TRAVEL!
THIS IS THE TALENT BESTOWED ONLY ON THOSE WHO ARE PROMISED THE FUTURE!

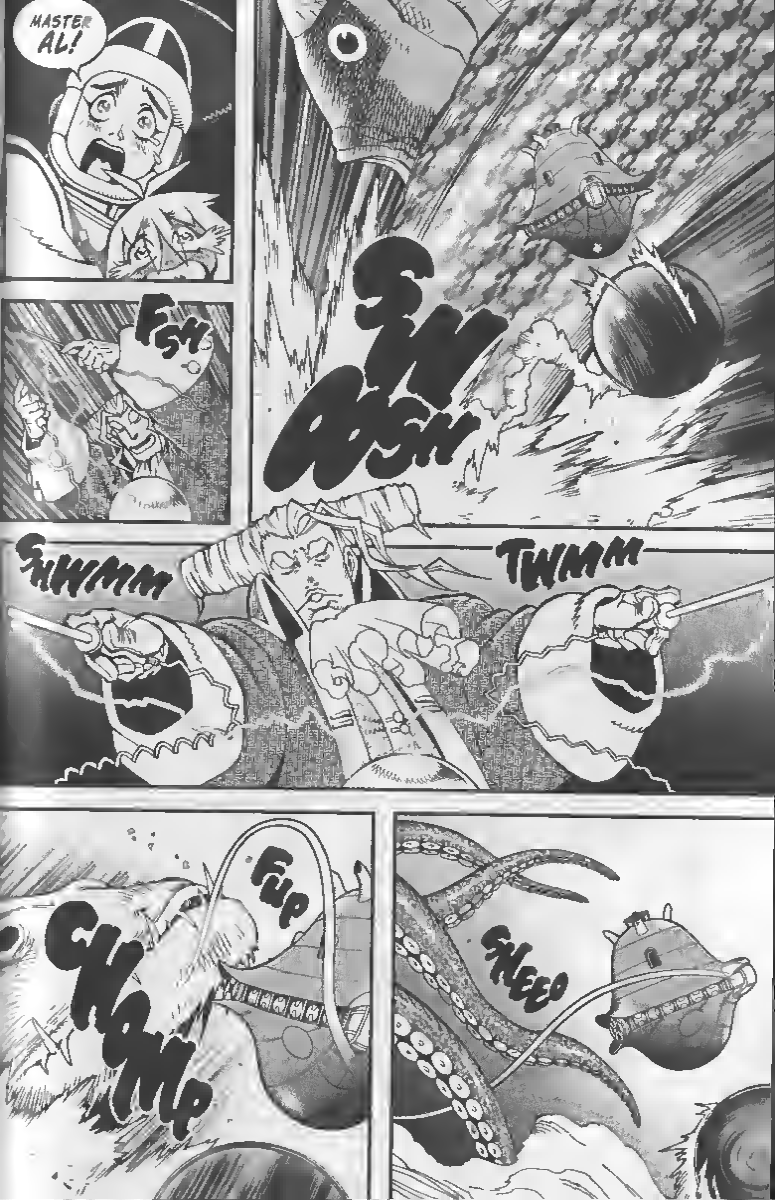
I AM ALCAN-TARA!
I ALONE HAVE THE POWER TO ALTER DESTINY!


KASHOOM


MMMMMMM
HOLY ELECTRASPIRIT CONTROL SYSTEM
THIS DEVICE DIRECTLY STIMULATES GYGRO'S BRAIN TO EXERT PRECISE CONTROL OVER THE ELECTRASPIRITS AFTER THIS INCIDENT, THE UNIT WILL BECOME KNOWN AS THE "GYGROPHONE"

GRO?
FOOP
ZTIG ZUTT
GRO RORO RO!
SHWASSH
SPIN THE SPHERE ON ITS X-AXIS!
PHSSEW

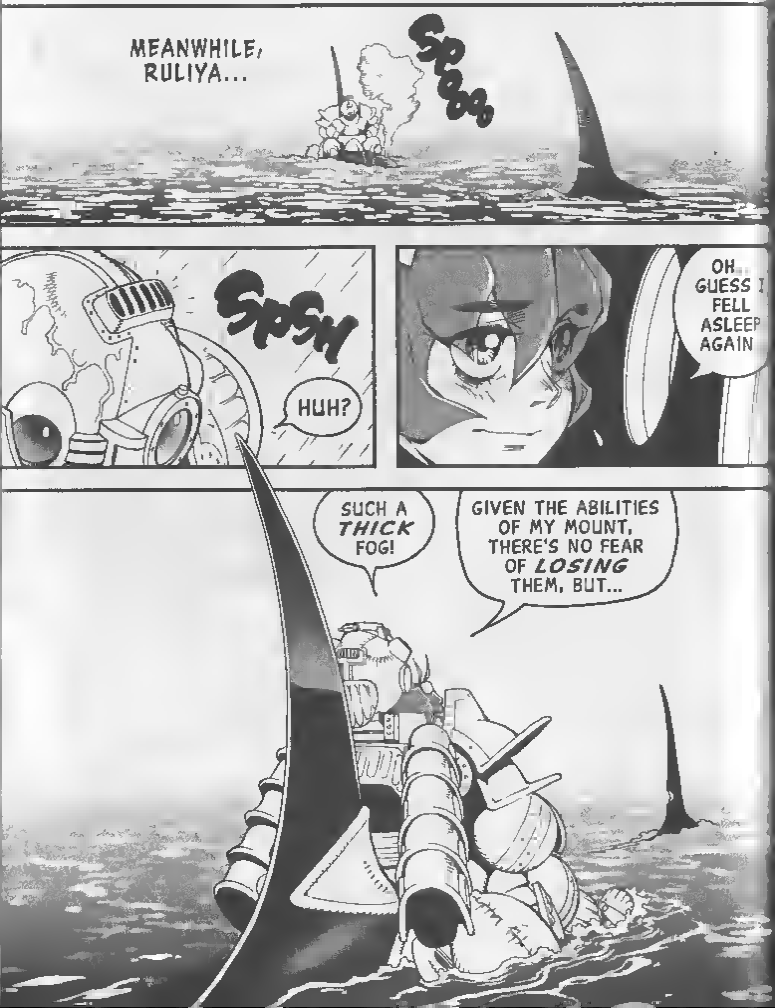

ROWWWRR!
SKLEK KREK
SCHWARSH


MASTER AL!
FSH
FSH
OOSH
THWMM
THWMM
FUP
CHOMP
SHEEO

RMM SHSH
PHING
AHAHA HAHAA!
IT FEELS LIKE WE'RE DANCING!
HAHA HAHAA HA!
YAAA HAAA!
KEH HEH HEH HEH!
THUS WAS BORN THE DANCE CRAZE KNOWN AS...

...THE ALCANTARA STEP!
HOW DARE YOU LAUGH!
SKRAK
SORRY!

SCENE TEN: THE WHITE FOG OF FORGETFULNESS


MEANWHILE, RULIYA...
SPOOM
SPSH
HUH?
OH... GUESS I FELL ASLEEP AGAIN
SUCH A *THICK* FOG!
GIVEN THE ABILITIES OF MY MOUNT, THERE'S NO FEAR OF *LOSING* THEM, BUT...

IN DOGGED PURSUIT OF ZYFORT, RULIYA HAS RIDDEN HER MOUNT FOR OVER A WEEK, WITH LITTLE REST AND LESS FOOD.
CRUNCH
RULIYA OF PERLA
NEWLY GRADUATED FROM SIUDALEY KNIGHTS ACADEMY, RULIYA HAD BEGUN HER JOURNEY TO BECOME A TRUE KNIGHT, WHEN SHE WAS MAROONED ON LIGHTHOUSE ISLAND AGE EIGHTEEN.
MY HAIR'S A MESS...
...MY SKIN IS STICKY...
...THESE DRIED RATIONS HAVE NO FLAVOR AT ALL...
...MY ARMOR'S HALF-FULL OF SEA-WATER...
...EVERY BONE IN MY BODY ACHES...
BUT SUCH HARDSHIP IS A KNIGHT'S DU--
--TEEEE
ZZZZ

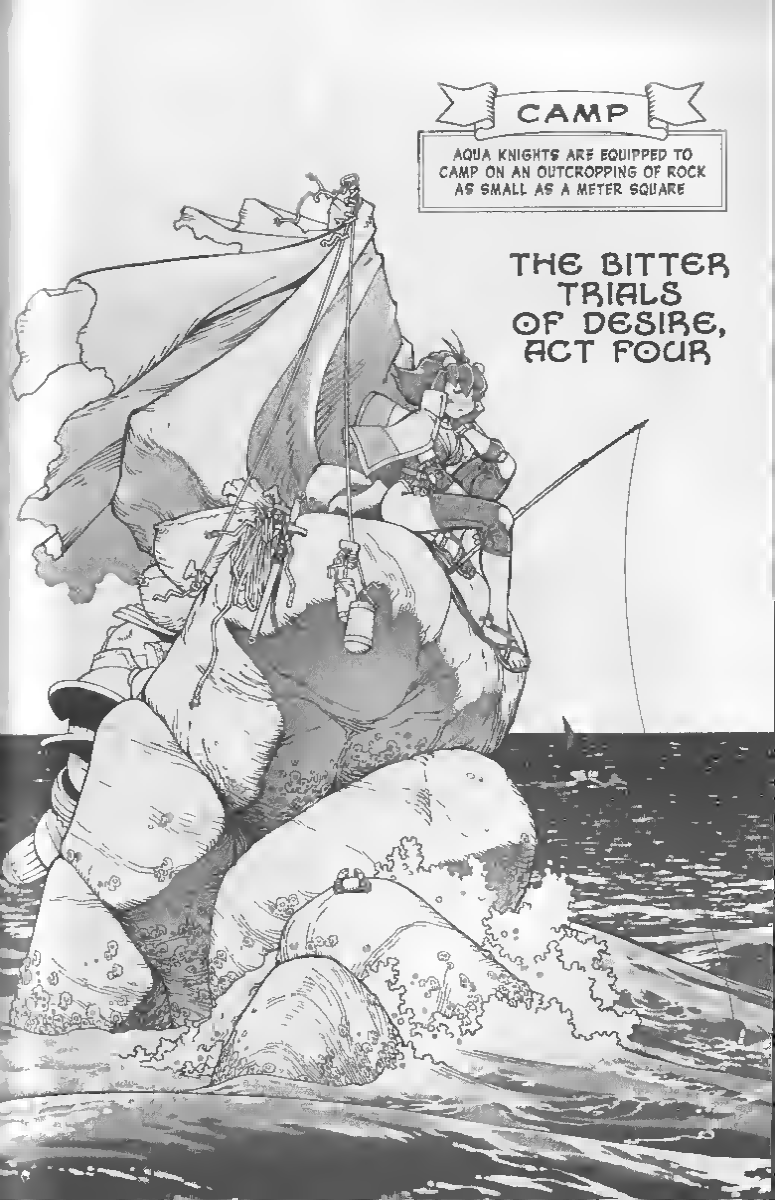
OH!
I KEEP FALLING ASLEEP!
RULIYA RECALLED HER PROMISE TO ARRABARUS...
MY LAST REQUEST...!
LADY RULIYA!
ASHIKA, I'LL SAVE...
..YOU..
ZZZZZZ
UNSEEN FOES HAUNT HER DREAMS...
FWO, FWO, FWO!
NO MATTER WHAT MONSTERS THEY MAY..
FLYING CLAM SHELL
HAMMERHEAD SHARK BEING (AS DESCRIBED BY ARRABARUS)
...BE..
ZZZZZZ
ONE DAY, I WILL BE A KNIGHT AS STRONG AS MY FATHER AND MOTHER!
TODAY'S HARDSHIPS ARE BUT TOMORROW'S LEGENDS!
ZNNNNNN
.....
BUT DESPITE HER CONVICTION, SOMETHING STILL WORRIED RULIYA..
SHUP

MUERTO-GARA-- THE SWORD OF PARCA!
WHY DID THE KNIGHT OF PARCA CHOOSE ME?
IT IS A NICE SWORD. BUT I CAN'T HELP BUT FEEL LIKE I'M BEING USED IN SOME GREAT CONSPIRACY.
I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT PARCA IS--OR THAT LIGHT SPHERE...
WHERE'S THE TRUTH IN ALL THIS?

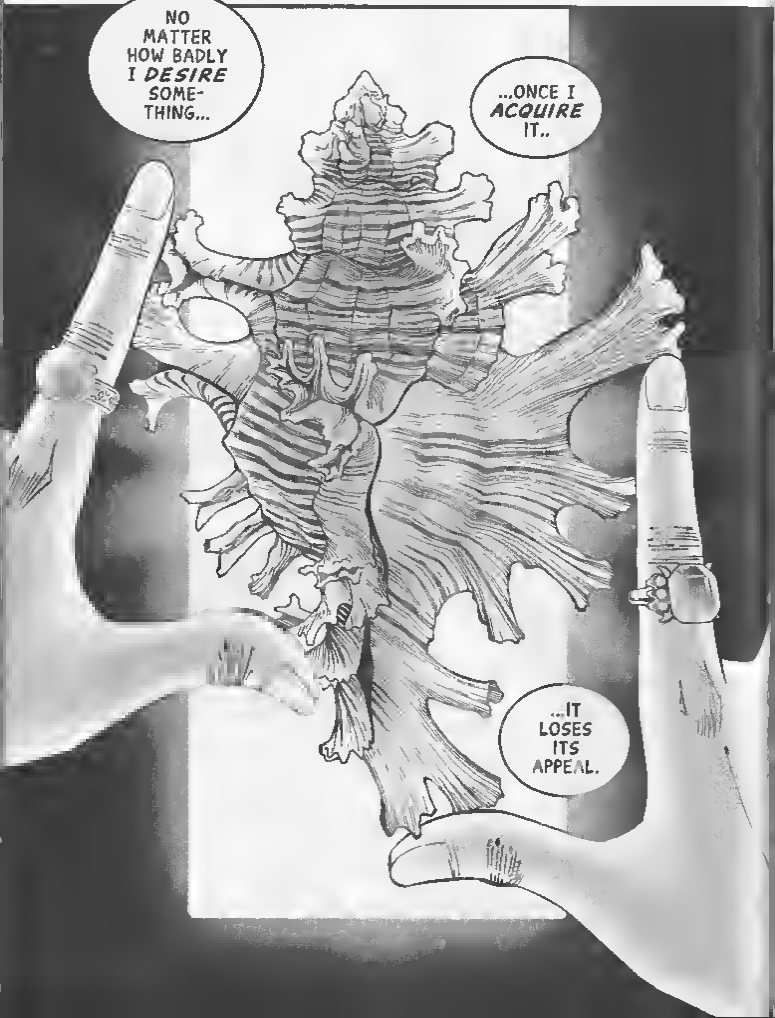
!
WHO'S OUT THERE?!
SISSH
SISSH
SISSH
SISSH
A ROW-BOAT?
BUT THERE AREN'T ANY ISLANDS NEAR HERE.
GREETINGS, TRAVELING KNIGHT.
I OFFER YOU THE COMFORTS OF A NEARBY CASTLE. PLEASE COME AND REST BEFORE CONTINUING YOUR JOURNEY.
MY MASTER, LORD BASSO, WILL SURELY WELCOME YOU TO HIS HOME
HEE!
ZZZZZ
?

I APOLOGIZE FOR MY RUDENESS...
BUT I MUST DECLINE, AS I AM ON A MISSION OF THE UTMOST IMPORTANCE AND...
YOU WERE SAYING..?
THAT IS...
UMM... UHH...
I THINK I WAS ABOUT TO SAY SOMETHING...
BUT I DON'T KNOW WHAT...
YOU ARE PROBABLY JUST FATIGUED.
I'M SURE YOU WILL REMEMBER AFTER A MEAL AND A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR HOSPITALITY.
GTGSH
GTGSH

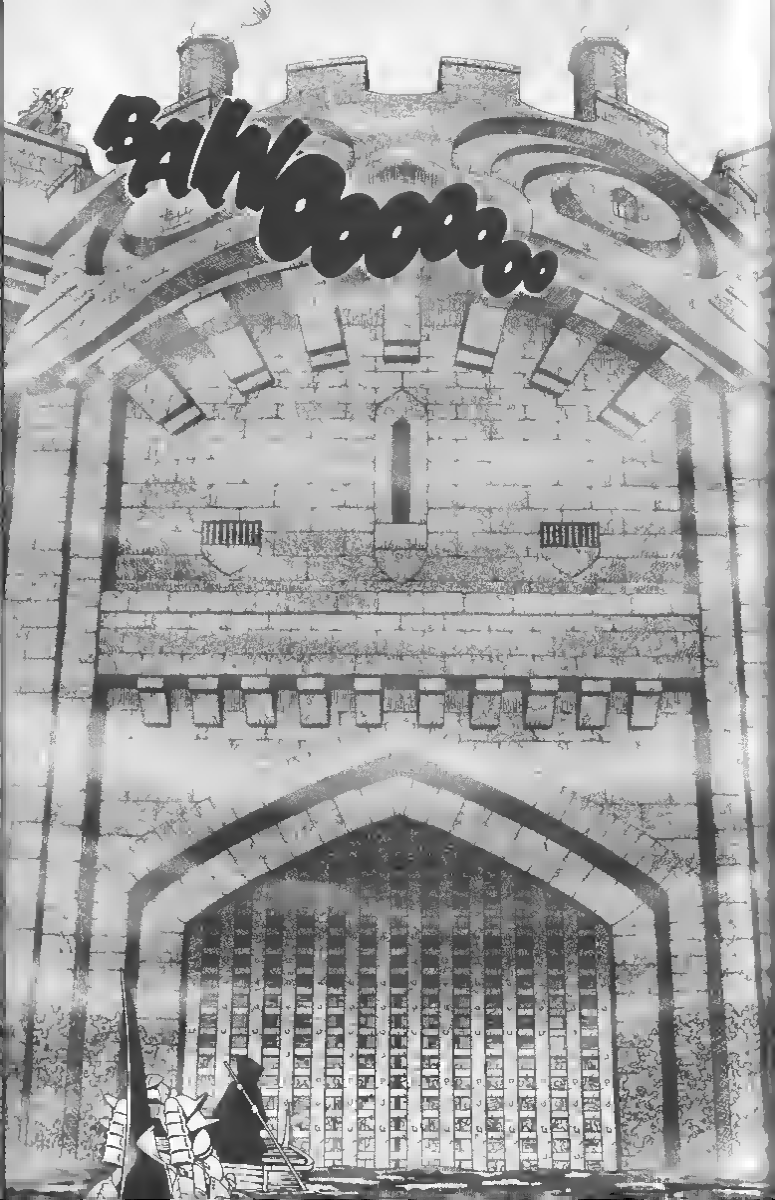
WELCOME, M'LADY, TO CASTLE ZONDAC.

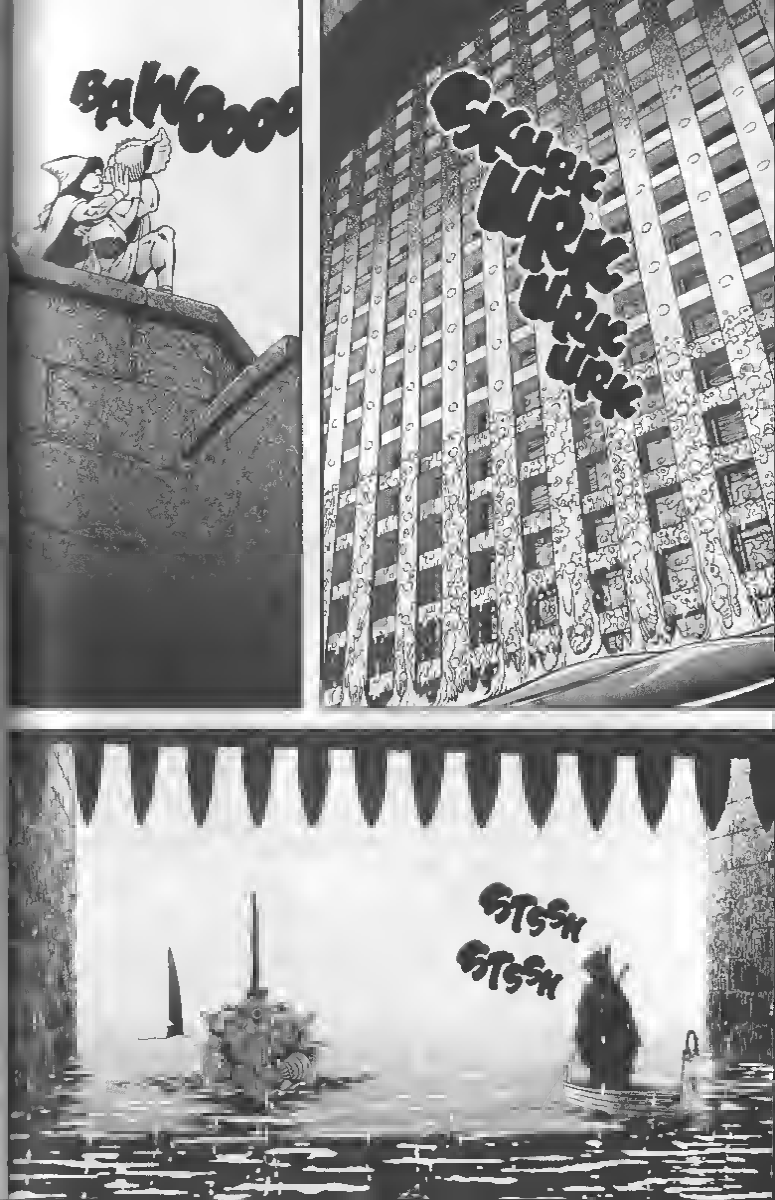

CAMP
AQUA KNIGHTS ARE EQUIPPED TO CAMP ON AN OUTCROPPING OF ROCK AS SMALL AS A METER SQUARE
THE BITTER TRIALS OF DESIRE, ACT FOUR

SCENE ELEVEN: THE CASTLE OF ILL OMEN



BOREDOM IS MY GREATEST ENEMY
IS IT MY DESTINY FOREVER TO SEEK A NEW TREASURE?
KNK
I'VE GAINED AS MUCH POWER AS ANY MAN COULD HOPE TO ATTAIN... YET IT DOES NOT SATISFY ME.
YOU JUST GET BORED EASILY, THAT'S ALL
SHUT UP!
I KNOW IT'S OUT THERE!
THAT WHICH I SEEK...
...PERFECT SATISFACTION!
BA WOOOOOO
THEY'RE HERE.


SAHOOOOOO


BAWOOOO
SKURK
URK
URK
URK
GTGSH
GTGSH

ORCA-SPEAK
HEY, YOUNG'UN!
THOUGHT WE WERE LOOKING FOR THE LITTLE ONE
GOT A BAD FEELIN' ABOUT THIS CASTLE
KYUKYUKYU KYUKYU
SPOT
TRUSTED MOUNT OF AQUA KNIGHT ARRABARUS VETERAN OF MANY WARS AND BATTLES 45 YEARS OLD
LADY RULIYA'S COMMANDS TAKE PRECEDENCE
NO MATTER WHERE LADY RULIYA GOES I WILL FOLLOW
KYUKYU KYUKYUKYU
I GUESS YOU GET COWARDLY IN YOUR OLD AGE
MIGMA
THOROUGHBRED MILITARY ORCA RAISED WITH RULIYA SINCE BIRTH 18 YEARS OLD
I FEEL FOR YOU
TCH! YOU GOT A SMART MOUTH, KID...
...JUST LIKE ME WHEN I WAS YOUR AGE
SKRSHH RSHH RSH
KYUKYU

SKRAMM
!
AS THE GATE SLAMMED SHUT, RULIYA SUDDENLY RECALLED HER MISSION
NO!
I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THIS!
WHAT'S WRONG?
WELL, THE TRUTH IS...!
ONCE MORE A FOG DESCENDS UPON HER MEMORY...
WHAT WAS I GOING TO SAY...?
...HUH?

WELCOME TO CASTLE ZONDAC!
I AM BASSO.

WELCOME TO MY HOME, LADY RULIYA OF PERLA!

THANK YOU. BUT HOW...
...DO YOU KNOW WHO I AM?
YOUR SHIELD TELLS THE TALE.
THE SYMBOL OF THE *ONE-EYED SUN* IS THE CREST OF *ALRAC*, THE KNIGHT OF SOL.
THE *PURPLE CLAMSHELL* IS THE CREST OF *EVELY*, THE KNIGHT OF DIAMANTE.

TO POSSESS THEM BOTH...
...YOU MUST BE NONE OTHER THAN THE ELDEST DAUGHTER OF THEIR UNION, LADY RULIYA.
I'M SURE YOU HAVE GROWN UP TO BE A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN
WILL YOU NOT RAISE YOUR FACEPLATE AND LET ME SEE FOR MYSELF WHAT YOU HAVE BECOME?
UMM... I'M SORRY, BUT..
WITH YOUR PERMISSION, I WOULD LIKE TO BATHE AND GET SOME REST FIRST.
EXHAUSTION DOESN'T MAKE FOR THE BEST FIRST IMPRESSION.
VERY WELL.
I WILL HAVE YOU SHOWN TO THE BATHS.

SCENE TWELVE: THE BLUE CAT COMETH

NICE RACK, MISSY.
WH-WHO'S THERE!?
A CAT!?
CHILL, GIRL
FWOOM

YUMOON
I'VE CAST A MAGIC BARRIER
BARRIER GOING UP!
NOW WE CAN TALK WITHOUT YOUR MIND GETTING SHANGHAIED BY THAT OLD GEEZER'S PSYCHIC POWERS.
AH!
WHAT AM I DOING HERE!?
RELAX AND HEAR ME OUT..
MY NAME IS ZUMA.
ZUMA, THE BLUE CAT.
I'M HERE TO WATCH OVER THIS CASTLE'S IDIOT MASTER
"IDIOT"...? YOU MEAN LORD BASSO?
HE DOESN'T SEEM ALL THAT--
THEN YOU'RE A TERRIBLE JUDGE O CHARACTER, MISSY!

I'LL COME RIGHT OUT AND SAY IT.
THAT MAN IS AFTER YOUR SHORT SWORD.
YOU CAN'T LET HIM GET HIS HANDS ON THE SWORD OF PARCA!
THAT WOULD BE THE LAST STRAW AROUND HERE!
HOW DO YOU KNOW ABOUT..?
THE KNIGHT OF PARCA GAVE ME THAT BLADE ON LIGHTHOUSE ISLAND!
I DIDN'T EVEN WANT IT
I JUST WASHED UP ON THAT ISLAND..
I WASN'T EVEN SUPPOSED TO BE THERE
÷SIGH÷
WHAT WAS HE THINKING, GIVING THE BLADE TO THIS GIRL
OH WELL

THIS WORLD CONTAINS *MANY* MAGICAL WEAPONS WIELDING GREAT POWER--
--INCLUDING THE *SWORD OF PARCA* GRANTED TO YOU.
AN ENCHANTED WEAPON CAN BE DETECTED BY A SELECT FEW--
--WHO SEE IT LIKE A RIPPLE SPREADING OVER A CALM LAKE.
OF COURSE, IT WAS *NO ACCIDENT* THAT YOU WERE GIVEN THE SWORD OF PARCA.
OF THAT YOU MAY BE SURE!
YOU MEAN THE KNIGHT OF PARCA HAS SOME KIND OF PLAN FOR ME!?
WHAT?! TELL ME!
I HAVE NO IDEA!
PERHAPS THE KNIGHT OF PARCA DIDN'T GIVE IT MUCH CONSIDERATION.
BUT IT DOESN'T CHANGE THE FACT THAT YOU ARE THE OWNER OF THE SWORD NOW!
IT *HAS* TO MEAN *SOMETHING!*
BUT.
HOW CAN YOU BE SO SURE?
YOU DON'T SEEM LIKE A *NORMAL* CAT.
TELL ME.
..WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?

HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT ABOUT THE *BREADTH* AND *DEPTH* OF THE WORLD WE LIVE IN?
NOT REALLY...
SO *MANY* REALMS...
YOU ARE FAMILIAR WITH OUR KINGDOM OF *MARMUNDO* AND *THE ANTIPODES*, LAND OF THE FOREIGNERS.
BUT THERE ARE *MORE!*
PARCA THE UNDERWORLD AND THE LAND OF THE GIANTS, *PAÍS VERTEBRAL*...
THE TOWERS OF THE GODS NAMED *ELYSIUM*...
AND THE GREAT FISH *LEVIATHAN* WHO SURROUNDS IT ALL, SWIMMING IN...
...THE *ASTRAL SEA*.

IF YOU CONCEIVE OF ALL THESE WORLDS AS FORMING A LARGE *BELL*...
. IT IS THE WEAPONS OF *MAGIC* THAT MAKE IT *RING*.
WHETHER YOU LIKE IT OR NOT...
..A *SINGLE* SWING OF YOUR BLADE WILL MAKE A SOUND HEARD 'ROUND THE WORLD
NOW YOU KNOW-- AND THE REST IS UP TO YOU.
MREOW
A SWING OF MY BLADE A SOUND HEARD 'ROUND THE WORLD...!?
FA FOOM
FA FOOM
FWOOF

PWOIP
H-HUH?
?
I... WAS I *TALKING* ABOUT SOME-THING...?
LADY RULIYA, YOUR BEDCHAMBER IS READY.
THANK YOU
WELL, NOW YOU KNOW
NOT THAT YOU'LL RECALL A WORD OF IT...
POOR GIRL... BUT I'VE DONE ALL I CAN.

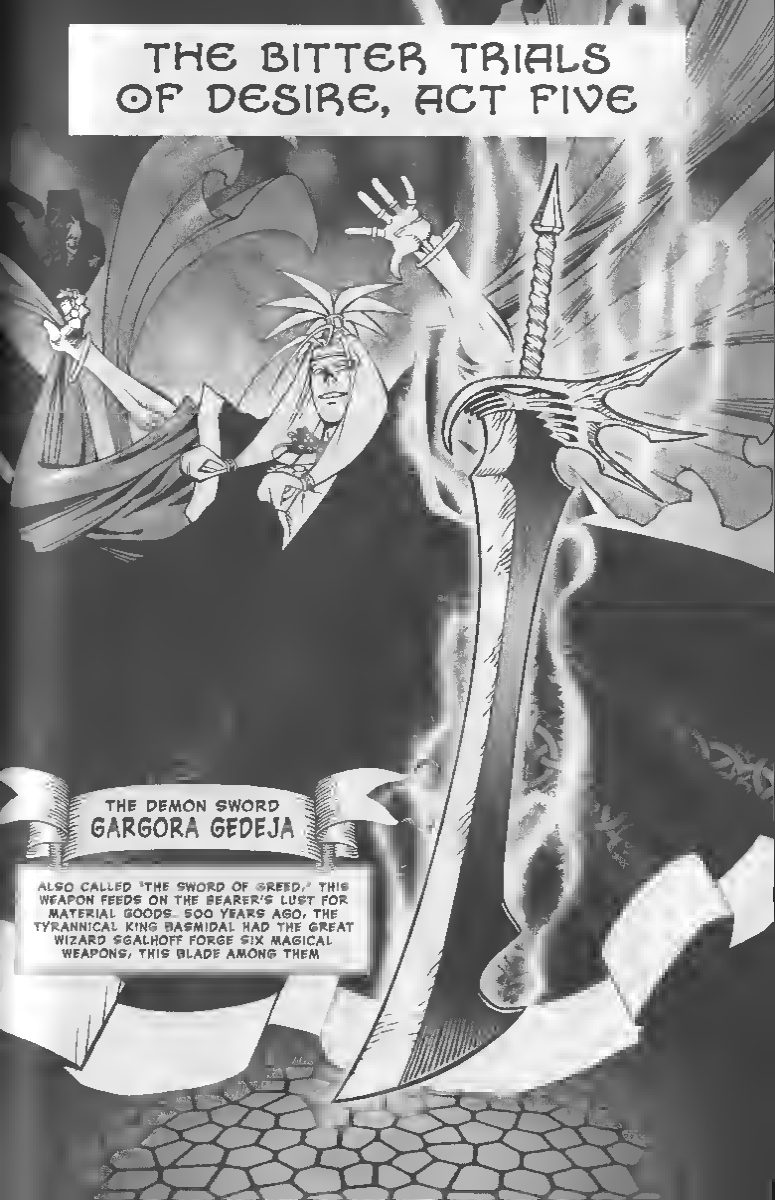
SCENE THIRTEEN: DEMON KNIGHT!

ZRAA
THE WOMAN SLEEPS!
NOW IS YOUR CHANCE TO STEAL THE SWORD OF PARCA
HEE HEE
THEFT? HOW BORING!
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING MASTER BASSO!?
FEAR NOT, CHAKUDAI I HAVEN'T FALLEN PREY TO SOME KNIGHTLY "CODE OF CONDUCT," IF THAT'S YOUR WORRY!
INSTEAD, I HAVE CONCOCTED A UNIQUE PLAN TO GET THAT SWORD-
A PLAN WORTHY OF BASSO!

THAT GIRL DOESN'T KNOW WHAT SHE *HAS!*
SHE WILL YIELD TO ME *WILLINGLY*, AND GRANT ME THE BLADE *OF HER OWN ACCORD.*
ONLY *THEN* SHALL THE SWORD OF PARCA BE *MINE!*
RATHER *INVOLVED*, DON'TCHA THINK?
LOWLY CREATURE! HOW COULD *YOU* COMPREHEND THE BEAUTY OF MY PLAN?
BESIDES... *LOOK* AT HER!
A *TRUE* THOROUGHBRED OF ROYALTY! I *WANT* HER.
THE SWORD OF PARCA *AND* A BEAUTY! *PERFECT SATISFACTION* AT LAST!
DEMON SWORD *GARGORA GEDEJA!* COME TO ME!

GOOD BOY!
BONK
KUNK
GWPM
NNNNN NNNN NNGH!
KRSH
SKRK
KABLAM
I SUPPOSE THE ONLY REASON HE HASN'T TAKEN OVER MARMUNDO ALREADY...
SIGS
PSSH
...IS THIS PESKY PERSONALITY QUIRK OF HIS

MY DEMON SWORD AND THE SWORD OF PARCA...
...WITH BOTH THESE WEAPONS, I WILL TRULY HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR!
DEMON KNIGHT
BASSO
THE BATTLE FORM ASSUMED BY BASSO WHEN WIELDING GARGORA GEDEJA, THE FABLED "DEMON SWORD." IT IS SAID THAT A DEMON KNIGHT'S ABILITIES EQUAL THOSE OF AN AQUA KNIGHT.


THE BITTER TRIALS OF DESIRE, ACT FIVE
THE DEMON SWORD
GARGORA GEDEJA
ALSO CALLED "THE SWORD OF GREED," THIS WEAPON FEEDS ON THE BEARER'S LUST FOR MATERIAL GOODS. 500 YEARS AGO, THE TYRANNICAL KING BASMIDAL HAD THE GREAT WIZARD SGALHOFF FORGE SIX MAGICAL WEAPONS, THIS BLADE AMONG THEM

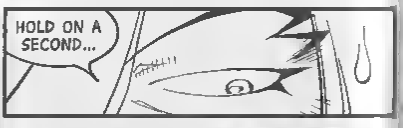
YOU HAVE THE *POWER* TO POSSESS, SIRE!
THE POWER TO POSSESS THE *WORLD* ITSELF, LORD BASSO!
AND TO THAT PURPOSE, I, *CHAKUDA OF UTAN,* RISK LIFE AND LIMB FOR YOU!

OH, PLEASE...
I HAVE NO DESIRE TO POSSESS THE WORLD, CHAKUDA. IT'S FILLED WITH MUNDANE JUNK.
I WANT MORE-- MUCH MORE!
ONLY THE FINEST OBJECTS CAN BRING PERFECT SATISFACTION!
ARGH! THE IDIOT!
FRRK
DID I CHOOSE THE WRONG ONE TO BEAR THE DEMON SWORD?
OF COURSE, HIS THINKING MAY CHANGE ONCE HE PROCURES THE SWORD OF PARCA .
BUT FIRST I MUST SATISFY HIS GREED.
RSSH
ONLY THE SWEETEST TREASURES IN THE WORLD WILL FILL MY HEART WITH JOY.
SUCH GOOD TASTE PROVES THAT I AM A UNIQUE AND SPECIAL INDIVIDUAL...!
FWB
LIKE A PRETTY BOX WITH NOTHING INSIDE!

OH, MY! DID THE TRUTH HURT THAT MUCH?
.....
FWMFM
I SHALL NOT SUFFER THE FEEBLE MEWLINGS OF SUCH A LOWLY CREATURE...!
RECOVERS FAST, DON'T HE?
LA LA LA LA...
THE MAGIC CIRCLE IS COMPLETED, LORD BASSO. I AM READY
HEE!
VERY GOOD!
NOW YOU SHALL WITNESS ONE OF THE GREATEST SPELLS OF THE NUVARIAN PSYCHIC MAGICKS...

I WILL ENTER THE SLEEPING GIRL'S DEFENSELESS PSYCHE AND REVEAL TO YOU HER MEMORIES.
AHHH! ONCE I KNOW HER FEARS AND DESIRES...
...IT WILL BE CHILD'S PLAY TO WIN HER OVER!
MMMM...
CORRECT! NOW DON'T BE SURPRISED BY WHAT YOU SEE! AND REMEMBER NOT TO LEAVE THE MAGIC CIRCLE FOR ANY REASON.
NOW— THE RITUAL SPELL OF DREAM DIVING!
AWAY

SCENE FOURTEEN: GIANTS IN HEAVEN AND EARTH



GHAAA
OOOO
A MOUNTAIN! BUT... THIS IS...
GYA AAAH! WHAT THE--!?

KAAA

BOOOM

GWOOOM
YAA AAA AAH!
NOT THAT I DOUBT YOUR ABILITIES, CHAKUDA...
BUT YOU CAN'T TELL ME THIS IS THAT GIRL'S MEMORIES!
THESE GIANTS... RULIYA'S PARENTS!?
CORRECT! THIS IS THE IMAGE THE GIRL HAS OF HER PARENTS.
WHAT!?
THIS REPRESENTS HOW LARGE HER PARENTS LOOM---IN HER HEART!
THE KNIGHT OF SOL AND THE KNIGHT OF DIAMANTE!
TWO OF THE BEST OF THAT ERA

AND THIS IS HOW SHE VIEWS THEM!?
BA BAM!
A PERSON...
...BEGINS LIFE AS A FRAIL AND DEFENSELESS CHILD.
TO A CHILD'S EYES, ADULTS SEEM LIKE GIANTS.
GODS WHO CREATE LIFE--AND, AT TIMES, PUNISH WITH GREAT FURY
MOTHER.
FATHER.

SCENE FIFTEEN: RULIYA'S DESIRE

952 ERA PRIMERO
ISLE OF PERLA
SHAAAAAAA
AH, BELOVED DAUGHTER...
THE KNIGHT OF SOL
ALRAC
CHIEF OF CEREMONIES FOR THE KINGDOM OF ENORME AND FIRST SCHOOLMASTER FOR THE KNIGHTS ACADEMY FORMED THIS YEAR AGE 33.
IT TEARS AT MY HEART NOT TO HEAR YOUR VOICE EVERY DAY!
SKRTCH
SKRTCH
OW WWW WW!
BUT YOUR FATHER MUST CARRY OUT AN IMPORTANT MISSION FOR THE KING
SNIFF
YOU KNOW I MISS YOU, RIGHT?

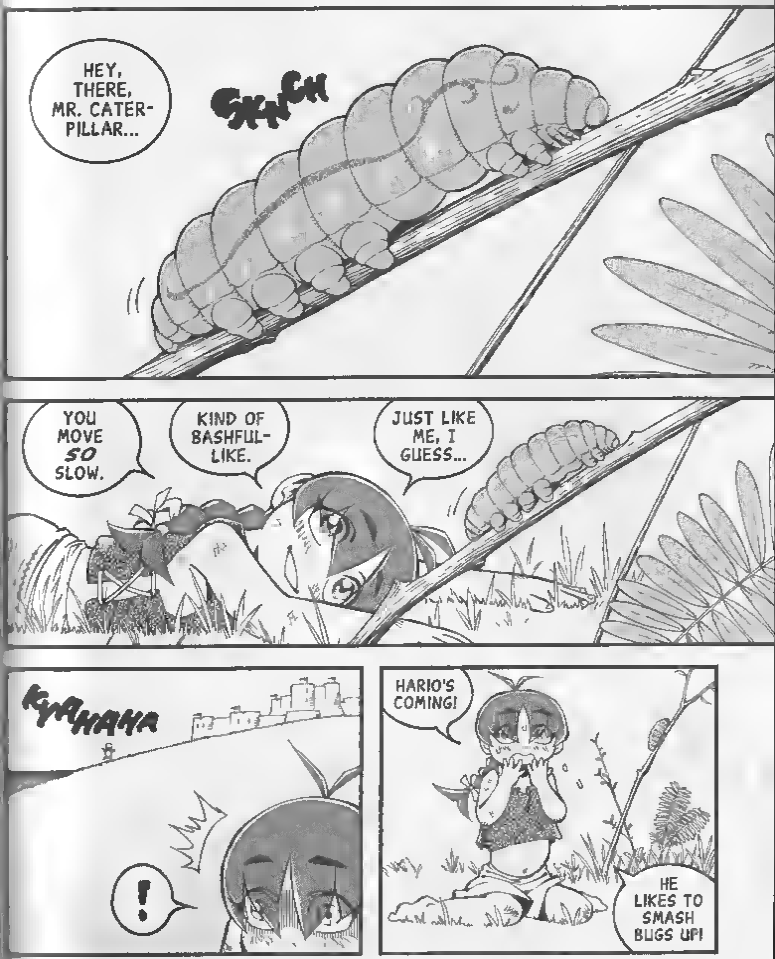
OUCH!!
.....
ELDEST DAUGHTER
RULIYA
AGE 5.
SAY, "YES, SIR!"
HEY! NO NEED FOR THAT!
WAP
OH, NO! I ALMOST FORGOT!
GUGGM
A GIFT FOR YOU!
MM MM
TAKE CARE OF THE CHILDREN, EVELY.
CHEAT ON ME AND YOU'RE A DEAD MAN.

GWIVE IT BWACK--!
HMPH.
WALBA! ROBOUGH!
HERE!
SNARF
THE KNIGHT OF DIAMANTE
EVELY
WIFE TO ALRAC AND THE RULER OF THE ISLE OF PERLA, AGE 28.

SLURP RIP POOP
CHMP
RULIYAI
YOU SHOULD BE TRAINING TO BECOME A GREAT KNIGHT...
...JUST LIKE YOUR MOTHER.
PRR RR
TWONK

FORTY!
FORTY-ONE!
WAAAA
TOK TOK
WHAT A WICKED WOMAN.
BUT THE GIRL HAS NO CHOICE..
..BUT TO STRIVE FOR HER MOTHER'S LOVE, NO MATTER WHAT.
TO ENDURE ANY HARDSHIP TO WIN A PARENT'S LOVE..
THAT IS BEING A CHILD.

SCENE SIXTEEN: RULIYA'S HOPE

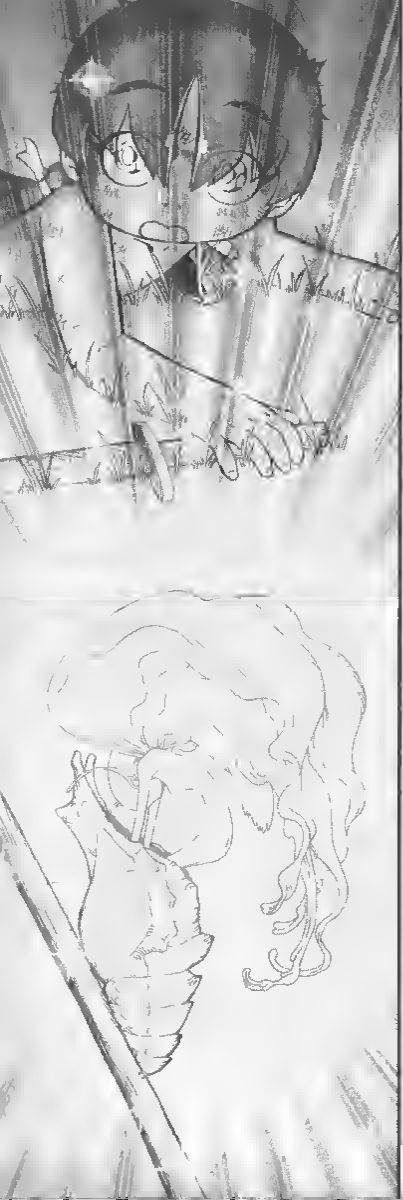


HEE HEE!
TUP TUP
ELDEST SON
HARIO
RULIYA'S YOUNGER BROTHER AGE 2
♥ HEE HEE! ♥
PLK
PLK
NO! STAY AWAY!
OOH! A BUGGIE!
TPTP
STAY AWAY!
WUM
SKONK
WUP WUP
WUP
GWAAAAH!

BWAM
RU-
LI-
FWIM
FWIM
FWIM
YA!
SHA
WAAAP
SPOOSH
UNLIKE YOU, HARIO IS..
...VERY FRAGILE!
SMILK
I'M GLAD MR CATER-PILLAR IS SAFE.

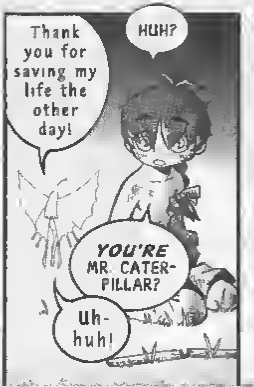
GET HER!
YOU'RE NOT SO TOUGH!
WAAAAAH! MOTHER!
BAM
BAM
DID YOU LOSE ANOTHER FIGHT?
NO CHILD OF MINE RETURNS HOME DEFEATED!
WAAA AAH!

~SNIFF~
~SOB~
MR. CATERPILLAR..
WHERE ARE YOU..?
WUMP
OH! P-PLEASE, GOD..
IF I AM SUCH A BAD CHILD..
...PLEASE TURN ME INTO A CATERPILLAR...
SHEEEE
SHEEEE



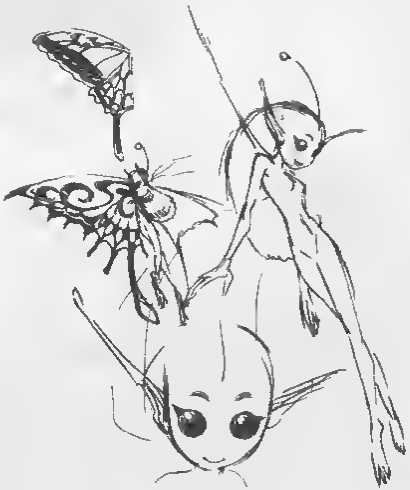
JNG

.....

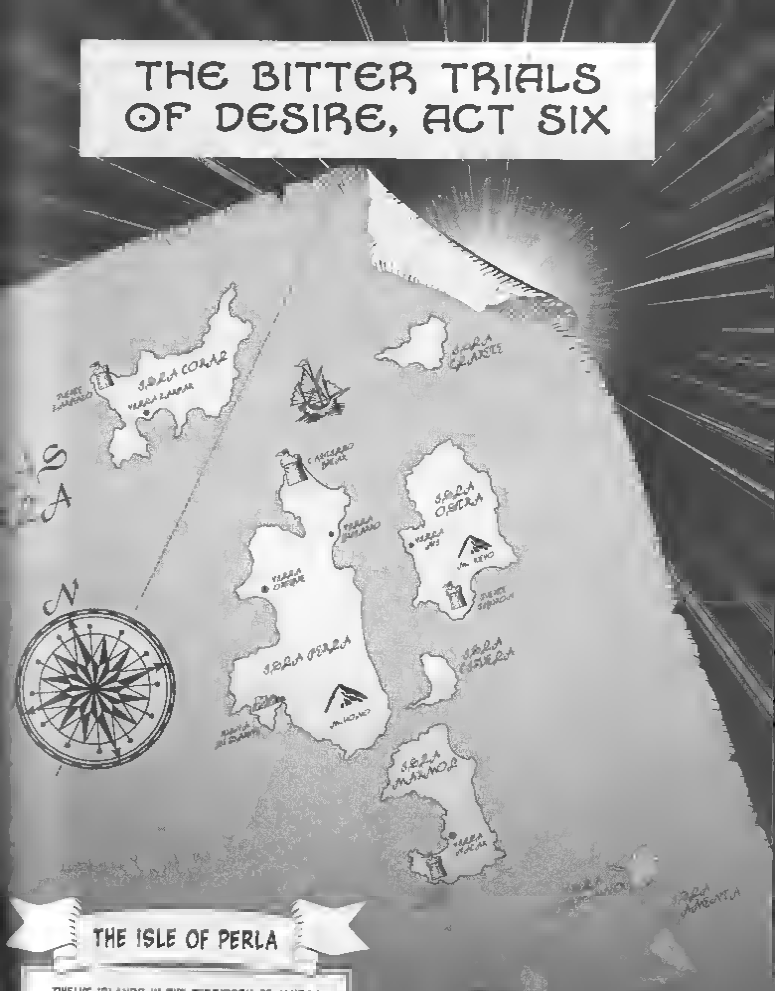

Thank you for saving my life the other day!
HUH?
YOU'RE MR. CATER-PILLAR?
Uh-huh!

Someday you too will change

...Into a BEAUTIFUL butterfly!



THE BITTER TRIALS OF DESIRE, ACT SIX



THE ISLE OF PERLA

TWELVE ISLANDS IN THE TERRITORY OF ALURAC MAKE UP THE PERLA CHAIN, KNOWN THROUGHOUT MARMUNDO FOR THEIR FINE PEARLS. PERLA IS THE HOMELAND OF ALURAC'S ANCESTOR *ALOCASSEN L'DAAN*, ONE OF THE ORIGINAL TWELVE KNIGHTS OF MAGNA PRIMERO

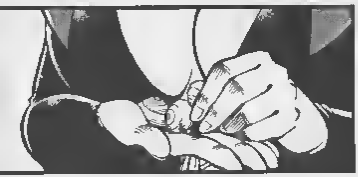
REALLY?
I'LL GROW WINGS LIKE YOURS...
...AND FLY?
No, no just a metaphor
I mean that you will grow up to be a fine adult-someday
OH, DARN
My name is PINOQUE.

WILL YOU BE MY FRIEND, PINOQUE?
Tee, hee! Okay!
I'll always be with you Ruliya
CHAKUDA...
YES, SIRE?

IS THAT FAIRY...
...A FIGMENT OF HER SUB-CONSCIOUS--LIKE THE GIANTS WE SAW EARLIER?
MOST LIKELY...
I'VE HEARD THAT LONESOME CHILDREN INVENT IMAGINARY PLAYMATES
THAT'S HOW THAT FAIRY CAME TO BE, I SUPPOSE.
OH!
THAT *POOR* GIRL!
GL
SH
CUT THAT OUT! *WEEPING* OVER A MERE CHILD!
I CAN'T *HELP* IT!

SYMPATHY WEAKENS THE POWER OF THE DEMON SWORD! IF YOU WISH TO BECOME A TRUE DEMON KNIGHT, THEN SHED TEARS ONLY FOR YOURSELF!
WIP
WUP
B-B-BUT...!
HE'S PATHETIC-- BUT AT LEAST HE GIVES A DAMN...
AS LONG AS BASSO HANGS ON TO THAT COMPASSIONATE STREAK, HE'LL NEVER DO THE DEMON KNIGHT THING
STILL
...HE SHOULDN'T FEEL SORRY FOR HER
THAT FAIRY'S PROB'LY A SIGN THAT LI'L RULIYA IS DETERMINED TO GROW UP RIGHT
HE'S STROHG INSIDE SHE WON'T GIVE UP HOPE
WE SHOULD BE THE ONES TO LEARN FROM HER...

SCENE SEVENTEEN: RULIYA'S FEARS



FSSSH
!
SKR
AKK
UFF
HFF
HMM.

WHERE DID YOU LEARN THAT SWORD TECHNIQUE?
Shhhh!
I...
I MADE IT UP MYSELF.
YOU ARE MY DAUGHTER...
...AFTER ALL, RULIYA!
GWWM

.....
I SEE IT CHAKUDA!
IS THAT SO, SIRE?
THAT GIRL'S TRUE DESIRE IS TO BECOME A GREAT KNIGHT!
AND HER GREATEST FEAR IS THAT SHE WON'T LIVE UP TO HER PARENTS' EXAMPLE, AND THEY WILL CAST HER OUT!
MREOW... YOU'VE GOT A LOT TO LEARN
W-WHAT DID YOU SAY!?

RULIYA'S TRUE DESIRE IS THAT HER PARENTS LOVE HER—!
—REGARDLESS OF HER ABILITIES OR STATUS.
AND RULIYA'S GREATEST FEAR?
WH-WHAT!?
RULIYA LOVES AND RESPECTS HER PARENTS THAT'S THE BASIC TENET OF HER EXISTENCE
IF SHE EVER REALIZES THAT SHE ACTUALLY HATES THEM, HER PSYCHE WILL FALL APART!
THAT SOMEDAY SHE WILL BE FORCED TO FACE THE TRUTH...
...THAT DEEP DOWN, SHE HATES HER PARENTS!

YES!
THIS IS THE TREASURE I SOUGHT ALL THESE YEARS!
A BEAUTY WHOSE STRENGTH AND BRILLIANCE ARE SO FRAGILE!
IT WOULD BE A TRUE FEAT TO WIN HER OVER--MIND, SOUL AND BODY...
...FOR SHE IS ALREADY INEXTRICABLY BOUND TO THE GODS"--HER PARENTS!

AAAH! THE POWER OF THE GARGORA GEDEJA IS GROWING!
HE WANTS THIS--HE REALLY WANTS THIS!
MK BOOM
MASTER BASSO! YOU ARE TRULY WORTHY OF BECOMING A DEMON KNIGHT!
FWSH
SHST
HUH!?
WHAT IS THIS!?
THE GIRL--SHE AWAKENS FROM HER SLUMBER
FW GFSH
I WOULD LIKE TO OBSERVE MORE, BUT IT'S TOO LATE!
WE MUST DEPART!

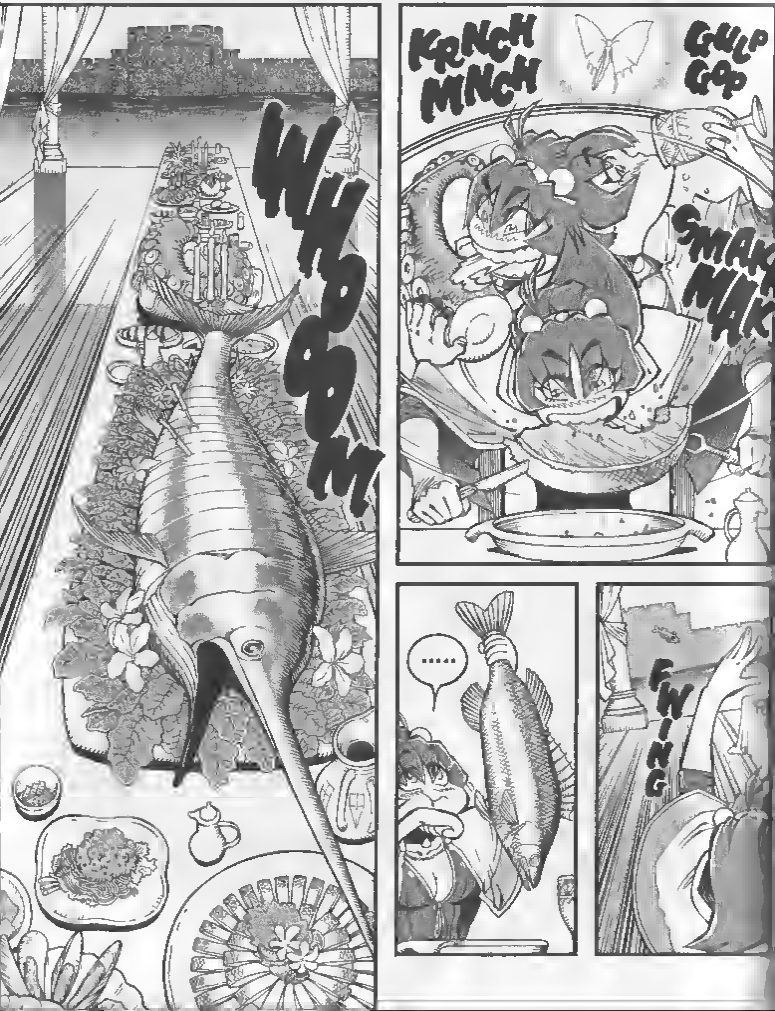
SCENE EIGHTEEN: A FAIRY FROM THE PAST

MMM! I SLEPT SO *WELL.*
I MUST BE SURE TO THANK LORD BASSO..
SUCH GREAT HOSPITALITY! BUT *WHERE* WAS I HEADING...
...AND *WHY* WAS I SO WORN OUT?

Tee, hee! Long time no see...!
SWAAP
WAH!
!?
A TINY DEMON!?
That's not very polite!
Don't tell me you've FORGOTTEN me!
We played together when you were little!
.....
AND THEN...
PINOQUE!?
ARE YOU PINOQUE!?
Bingo!
WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN ALL THIS TIME?
YOU SAID YOU'D ALWAYS BE WITH ME

Tee, hee! I HAVE always been by your side, Ruliya...
RULIYA is the one who chose not to see ME, that's all...
THEN HOW COME I CAN SEE YOU AGAIN ALL OF A SUDDEN?
Dunno... but it makes me happy!
Crybaby caterpillar's all grown up!
And your boobs got big, too!
Very nice...!
POKE
POKE
DIDN'T I HEAR THE SAME THING LAST NIGHT...?
By the way..
The Knight of Parca gave you a sword, didn't he?
That thing isn't good for you!
Give it to someone else-- or throw it away!
FWUP
HUH...?

SCENE NINETEEN: WHEN BLOOD BURNS RED



FWSH
SPLOOSH
HEH HEH HEH
YOU EAT WITHOUT RESTRAINT
I LIKE THAT! IT SUITS YOUR BEAUTY, M'LADY
LIKE A GLITTERING SEA HARE ON THE BEACH--THAT'S YOU!
Don't listen to him, Ruliya
Men are like great white sharks
SURE.. BUT, HEY--CAN'T HE HEAR YOU?
No fear!
psst psst
Only those with special sight--and ANIMALS--can detect my presence

BY THE WAY, LADY RULIYA...
I HEAR THAT YOU POSSESS A BLADE FROM PARCA...
I WOULD SO LOVE TO SEE IT.
.....
HERE YOU GO. IT'S CALLED "MUERTOGARA."
TUNK

OOOOH...
SO THIS IS THE BLADE THAT CAN SLAY DEATH HIMSELF .!
OBSERVE ITS COLD BEAUTY...!
I SENSE A POWER VERY DIFFERENT FROM THAT OF THE DEMON SWORD..
MMMM! HOW FEARSOME
TAGMEC, THE KNIGHT OF PARCA, GAVE ME THIS BLADE...
...BUT I CAN'T SEEM TO REMEMBER ANYTHING AFTER THAT!
WHY DID THE KNIGHT OF PARCA GIVE THIS TO ME...?

Ah-ha! YOU'RE the one who stuffed Ruliya's head full of all those ideas!
WHO ARE YOU...?
SHEE WEEEE
Pinoque Super Deluxe...
Schnozz Attack!
GYA AAA!
POIK
HSSSSS SSSSS
TEE HEE!
I HATE TO SAY IT...
...BUT THIS IS A CURSED BLADE!
MREOWF WAK SPSST
AS LONG AS YOU WIELD THIS SWORD, NOTHING BUT DISASTER WILL BEFALL YOU!
WEEE HSSSSS SSSS

RULIYA'S INSTINCTS SERVED HER WELL...
LORD BASSO IS A LIAR!
HE ISN'T TELLING THE TRUTH...
BUT WHY?
THAT BLADE DOESN'T SUIT YOUR BEAUTY.
I WOULD BE HONORED TO RELIEVE YOU OF SUCH A HIDEOUS BURDEN!
DOES HE WANT IT SO BAD THAT HE'D LIE TO GET IT?
PINOQUE SAID TO JUST GIVE IT AWAY--BUT I SMELL A RAT...
I COULDN'T IMPOSE ON YOU LIKE THAT
KA KREK
LORD BASSO? DID YOUR FACE JUST... CRACK!?
FWUP

OH, NO..! HE WANTS THE BLADE SO BADLY...
THAT HIS GREED IS TRANSFORMING HIM--WITHOUT THE DEMON SWORD!
TH-THEN, WILL YOU AT LEAST LET ME BORROW THE BLADE FOR A LITTLE WHILE?
I'LL GLADLY PAY JUST TO HOLD IT...
AND BRING YOU BAD LUCK? NEVER!
WH-WHAT WAS THAT?
WHAT, M'LADY?
LADY RULIYA, I UNDERSTAND YOU STRIVE TO PROVE YOURSELF TO YOUR PARENTS...!
BUT DO YOU REALLY WANT TO RELY ON THE SWORD OF PARCA TO ACCOMPLISH THAT!?

LORD BASSO IS RIGHT...
BOTH MOTHER AND FATHER ACQUIRED THEIR SKILLS AND STATUS ON THEIR OWN MERITS--AND I MUST DO THE SAME!
MUERTOGARA, IT WOULD SEEM I'M NOT TO BE YOUR KEEPER.
MAY YOU FIND ONE MORE WORTHY TO WIELD YOU.
CHAK
LORD BASSO, I--
PING

WHAT'S THE MATTER?
BOOOMM

THE BITTER TRIALS OF DESIRE, ACT SEVEN

WHY ARE YOU LOOKING AT ME LIKE THAT?
JUMP
YOU IDIOT!
YOU JUST RUINED OUR CAREFULLY LAID PLANS!
NNN NGH...
A crab monster!?
I JUST CAN'T SEEM TO CONVINCE YOU, CAN I?
THEN THERE'S NO OTHER OPTION...

PLEASE MARRY ME!
EEE EEK!
PNK

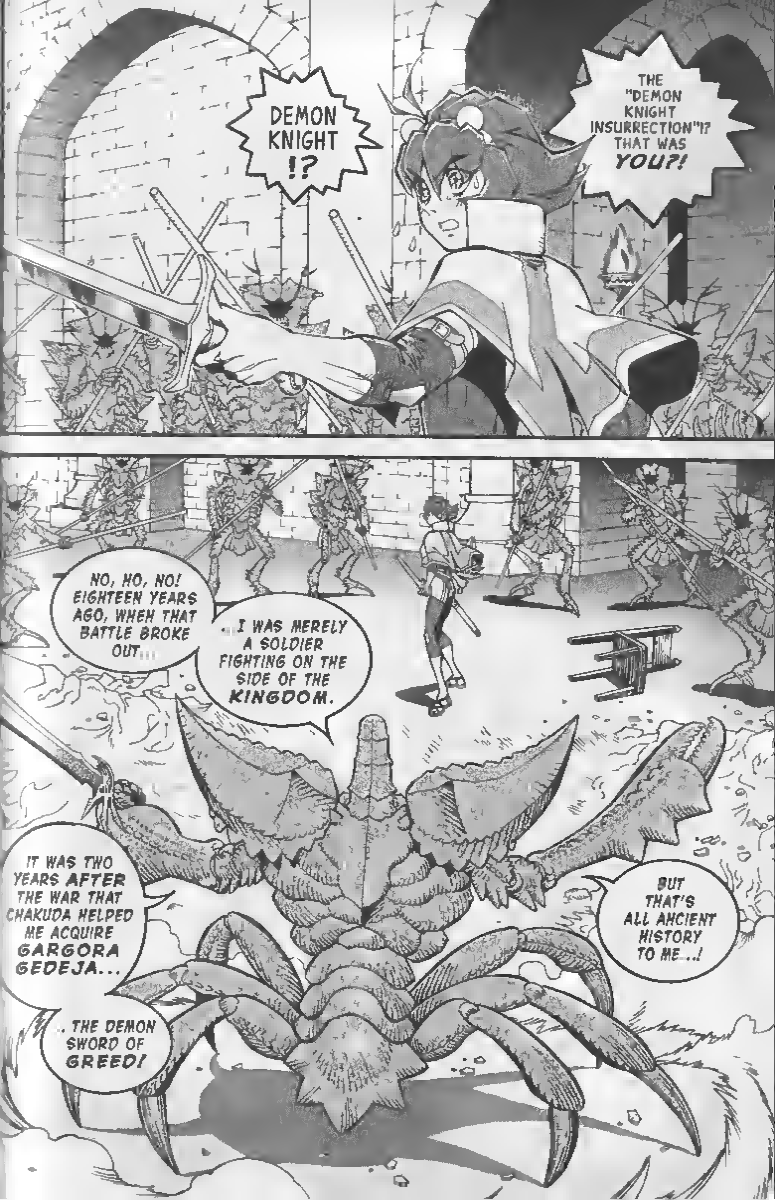
IF WE ARE UNITED, I SHALL ACQUIRE BOTH THE BLADE AND YOU!
THAT IS TRULY TWO BIRDS WITH ONE STONE!
OWW...
PUP
PIP
FWOOSH
AND THUS DEATH'S SWORD STOLE A BIT OF RULIYA'S SPIRIT...
...AND AT THE SAME TIME--
THE SPELL--!
OH, NO!
IT'S BROKEN!

HISSS-

BACK YOU FIEND!
SKYP
KREK
FIEND? WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
WOULD YOU NOTICE ALREADY!?
HA HA HAAA!

ALAS, I NEVER WANTED YOU TO SEE ME LIKE THIS.
NOW I AM FORCED TO REVEAL THE SAD TRUTH--A WARLOCK CAST A SPELL ON ME.
ONLY A SWORD FROM THE UNDERWORLD AND A KISS FROM A BEAUTY...
OH, QUIT WITH THE LYING!
KABOOM
FINE! BE THAT WAY!

LET'S START OVER!
THIS IS GARGORA GEDEJA!
AND I AM THE DEMON KNIGHT, BASSO OF ZONDAC!
KLAK
KLAK
MEET MY MINIONS--THE GAMADO!
KREEK
SKEEK
AND MY WIZARD, CHAKUDA OF UTAN!
RWING


DEMON KNIGHT !?
THE "DEMON KNIGHT INSURRECTION"!? THAT WAS YOU?!
NO, NO, NO! EIGHTEEN YEARS AGO, WHEN THAT BATTLE BROKE OUT...
...I WAS MERELY A SOLDIER FIGHTING ON THE SIDE OF THE KINGDOM.
IT WAS TWO YEARS AFTER THE WAR THAT CHAKUDA HELPED ME ACQUIRE GARGORA GEDEJA...
BUT THAT'S ALL ANCIENT HISTORY TO ME..!
..THE DEMON SWORD OF GREED!

ALL THAT I NOW DESIRE ARE YOU AND THE SWORD OF PARCA!
I MUST HAVE PERFECT SATISFACTION! AGREE TO BECOME MY BRIDE!
FEH...
THE ONLY MAN WHO WILL EVER WIN MY HAND...
...MUST FIRST BEST ME IN COMBAT!
OUT OF MY WAY, YOU CRAB-FIENDS! I'M LEAVING!

KLANK
SK GSH
TSHK
SHRASH
ENGSH
BAM
WAM
WAM
WAM
FWMP
POK
TOK

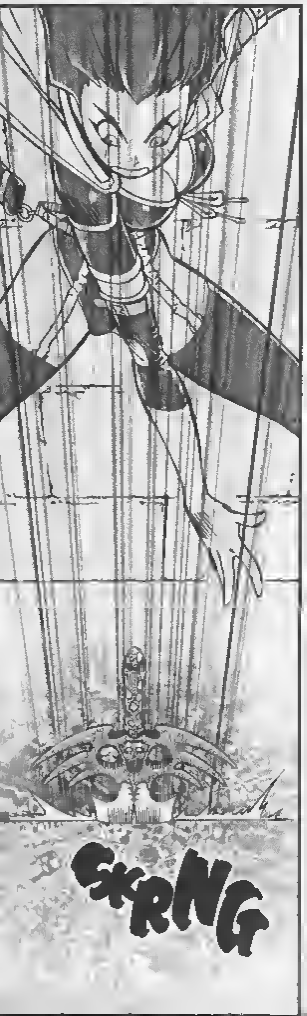
SKANG
FOOSH
GWA AAA AH!
KEKKA KEK
Eeek!

OOOH! SHE'S A LIVELY ONE...
BUT HOW LONG CAN EVEN SHE DEFEND HERSELF AGAINST SUCH OVERWHELMING NUMBERS?
KANG
TNG
FWAK
WSSSH
SKANG

Ruliya!
I'll get your armor--just hold out a little longer!
B-but--how do I get OUT of here?
FIP
FUP
THIS WAY!
!?
HFF
UFF
SKEKKA
KREKKA

NOW...
THE TIME HAS COME TO GIVE IN, M'LADY!
HEED MY CALL--
YOU TRIED TO TRICK ME--
--TO GRATIFY YOUR AVARICE! WHAT KIND OF A KNIGHT ARE YOU?!
--TAGMEC, KNIGHT OF PARCA!
SHWING

SCENE TWENTY: THE KNIGHT OF PARCA RETURNS



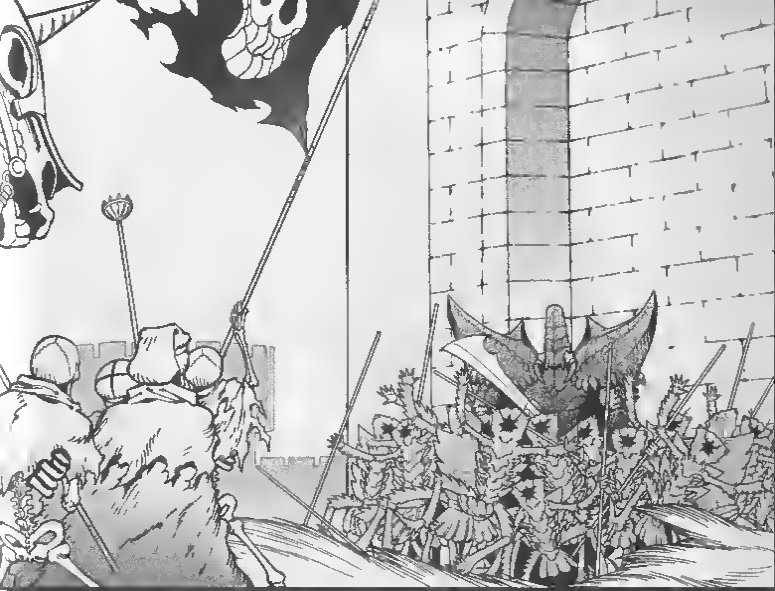
BONE!

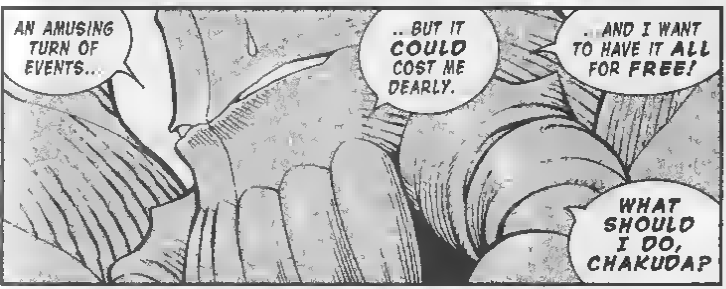
THE BITTER TRIALS
OF DESIRE, ACT EIGHT

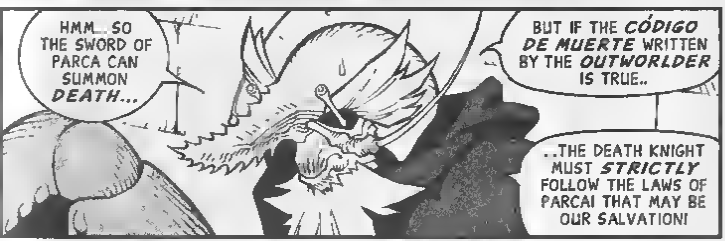
SNIFF
HFF
STEED OF PARCA
VIVOANTES

KANG
THE KNIGHT OF DEATH
TAGMEC
AS THE ENFORCER OF THE LAW OF PARCA, TAGMEC COLLECTS THE SPIRITS OF THE DEAD AND LEADS THEM TO THE UNDERWORLD HE GAVE MUERTOGARA TO RULIYA
KNK KLNK
TNK
TAGMEC'S HENCHMEN
HEH...
SUMMONING DEATH ITSELF SCARES ME A LITTLE..
BUT...

YOU'RE ALL GUILTY FOR USING THE DEMON SWORD OF GREED!
IT'S MY DUTY AS A KNIGHT TO HAVE YOU JUDGED FOR YOUR MISCONDUCT!
STOP PUSHING!
GRAA AAH...
GRRN NNN...




AN AMUSING TURN OF EVENTS...
.. BUT IT COULD COST ME DEARLY.
..AND I WANT TO HAVE IT ALL FOR FREE!
WHAT SHOULD I DO, CHAKUDA?


HMM... SO THE SWORD OF PARCA CAN SUMMON DEATH...
BUT IF THE CÓDIGO DE MUERTE WRITTEN BY THE OUTWORLDER IS TRUE..
..THE DEATH KNIGHT MUST STRICTLY FOLLOW THE LAWS OF PARCA! THAT MAY BE OUR SALVATION!

SCENE TWENTY-ONE: QUESTIONS FROM THE UNDERWORLD

DO AS I SAY...
PSST PSST PST
OKAY.
SKOOM
SWEEM
WEEM
VWOOOO
THE FABLED DEMON WIND?
I'VE HEARD TALES OF THIS!
SKRANG

ASK WHAT YOU WILL...
...ENFORCER OF THE LAWS OF DEATH!
TOOM
OH, WOW!
YOU ARE SO COOL!
OOOH AHHH
HOW'M I DOING, CHAKUDA?
A BIT OVER THE TOP, BUT ALL RIGHT.
PSST PSST PST
KLANG

TELL ME THIS!
WHAT IS "EVIL"?
!?
EVIL...
IS BUT AN ASPECT OF THE WILL TO LIVE.
ONLY WITHIN THE LIVING, DO THE SEEDS OF EVIL EXIST.

THEN...
WHAT IS A "DEVIL"?
A "DEVIL"...
...IS ONE WHO DESIRES EVIL FOR EVIL'S SAKE. LIKE THE LIFE FORCE...
...A DEVIL SEEKS ULTIMATE FREEDOM, ULTIMATE PASSION!
BA DOOM

WHAT'S ALL THIS?! LESS TALK! MORE ACTION!
COME ON, KNIGHT OF DEATH-- DEFEAT MY ENEMY!
HMM?
WHAT'S THE HOLD-UP!?
BRAVE RULIYA...
REGRETTABLY THESE BEINGS ARE NOT SUBJECT TO THE LAWS OF PARCA
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
WE MAY ONLY GOVERN THE DEATHS OF OUR OWN.
SO DECREES THE KING OF PARCA.

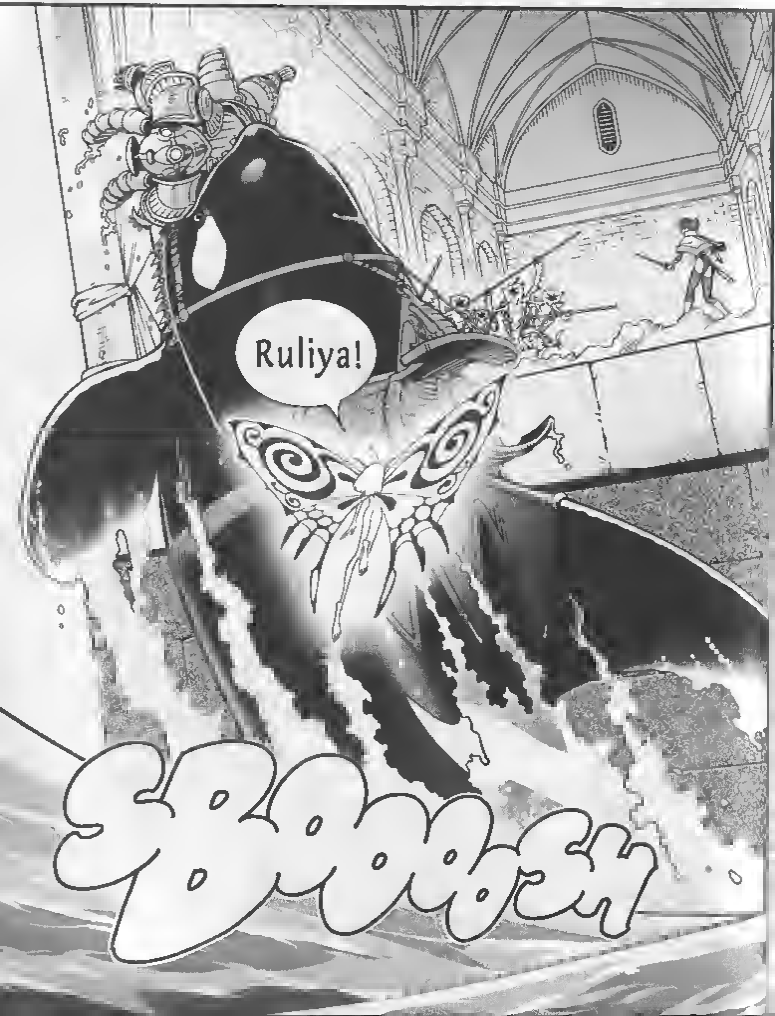
KNIGHTS FOR KNIGHTS, FISHERMEN FOR FISHERMEN, THIEVES FOR THIEVES...
MY KING HAS *MANY* ENFORCERS OF DEATH--ONE FOR EACH LIVING THING, OF EVERY STATURE.
THAT CREATURE THERE IS NEWLY CREATED..
...SO FOR ONE SUCH AS HE, THE UNDERWORLD MAY NOT PASS JUDGMENT UNTIL THE DAY HE IS FATED TO DIE THAT IS THE LAW
THEREFORE, TO MY REGRET...
...I CAN OFFER YOU NO AID
S-S... BUT...
SKRNG
THAT *THING* IS A *DEMON KNIGHT!* HE'S *BAD!*
YOU'RE JUST GOING TO LEAVE HIM BE!?

GOOD AND EVIL ARE CONSTRUCTS OF THE LIVING.
I HAD HOPED YOU WOULD ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS...
...AND PROVE YOURSELF A WORTHY BEARER OF THE SWORD OF PARCA
LIGHT SPHERE, SWORD OF PARCA, DEMON SWORD. WHAT IS ALL THIS?! IS THERE SOMETHING I SHOULD KNOW?
SOMETHING YOU SHOULD KNOW...?
YOU HAVE EVERY ANSWER YOU REQUIRE-- INSIDE YOU.

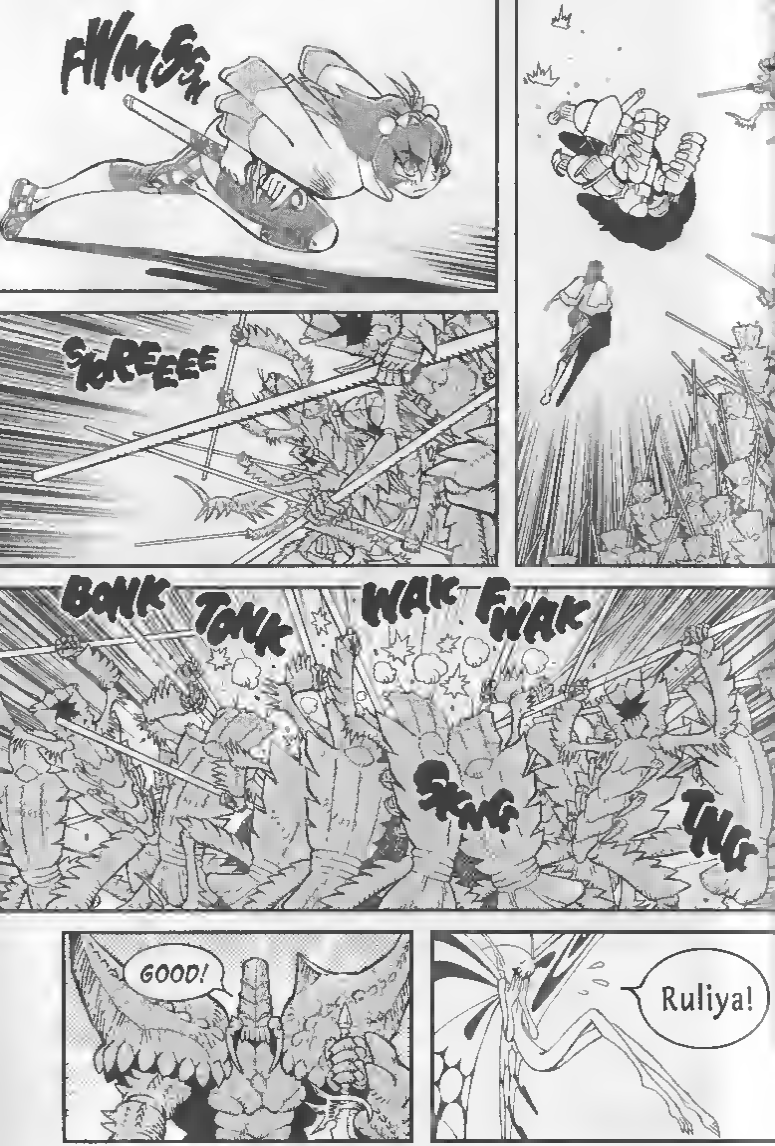
HAVE FAITH.
THE SWORD OF PARCA IS ABSOLUTE TRUTH.
REMEMBER... DEATH COMES TO *ALL* THINGS... EVENTUALLY.
WWSH
WWOOOO

WOOOOOO
FWSH
SWAAAAAA
GONE
HEH...
HEH HEH...
KEH KEH KEH KEH KEH KEH KEH KEH
KEH KEH KEH KEH KEH KEH KEH KEH

SCENE TWENTY-TWO: THE TWO SWORDS CLASH!



We brought your armor!
PINOQUE! MIGMA!
SPWA
ZANG
TUNKA
KUNKA
MY MINIONS-- DO NOT PERMIT HER TO DON HER ARMOR!

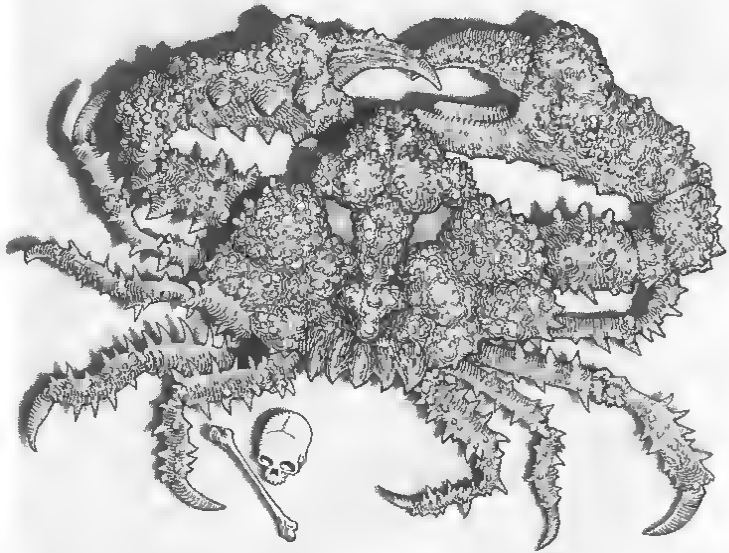

FWMSH
SCREEEE
BONK
TONK
WAK
FWAK
SKNG
TNG
GOOD!
Ruliya!

SKNNG
TNNG

KREEK
SKREEK
SKWAM
KREEK
ZANG

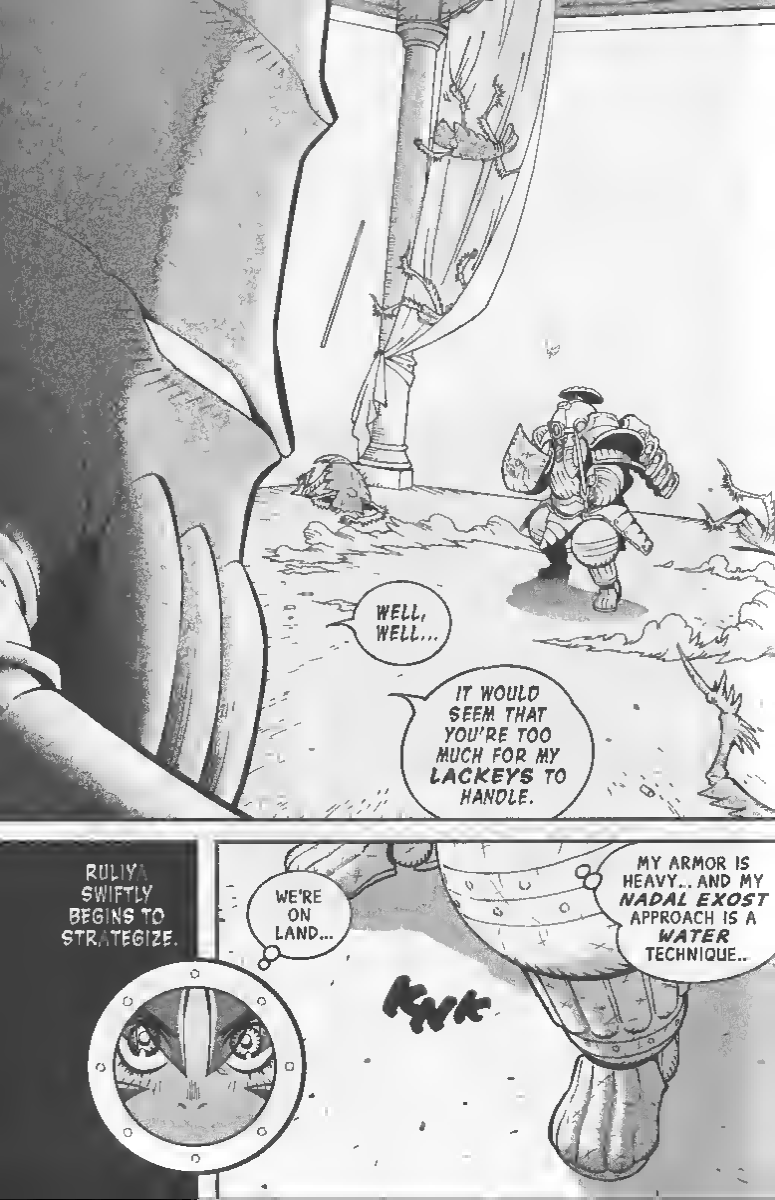
EN GARDE, DEMON KNIGHT!
WATER ARMOR
ARMADURA
AN AQUA KNIGHT'S UNDERWATER COMBAT SUIT FASHIONED OF 'GIANT'S BRONZE,' AN ALLOY HARDER THAN STEEL, WHICH DOES NOT RUST. EMPLOYING MAGIC GEARS, IT KEEPS THE AIR INSIDE FRESH WHILE INCREASING THE WEARER'S STRENGTH TENFOLD

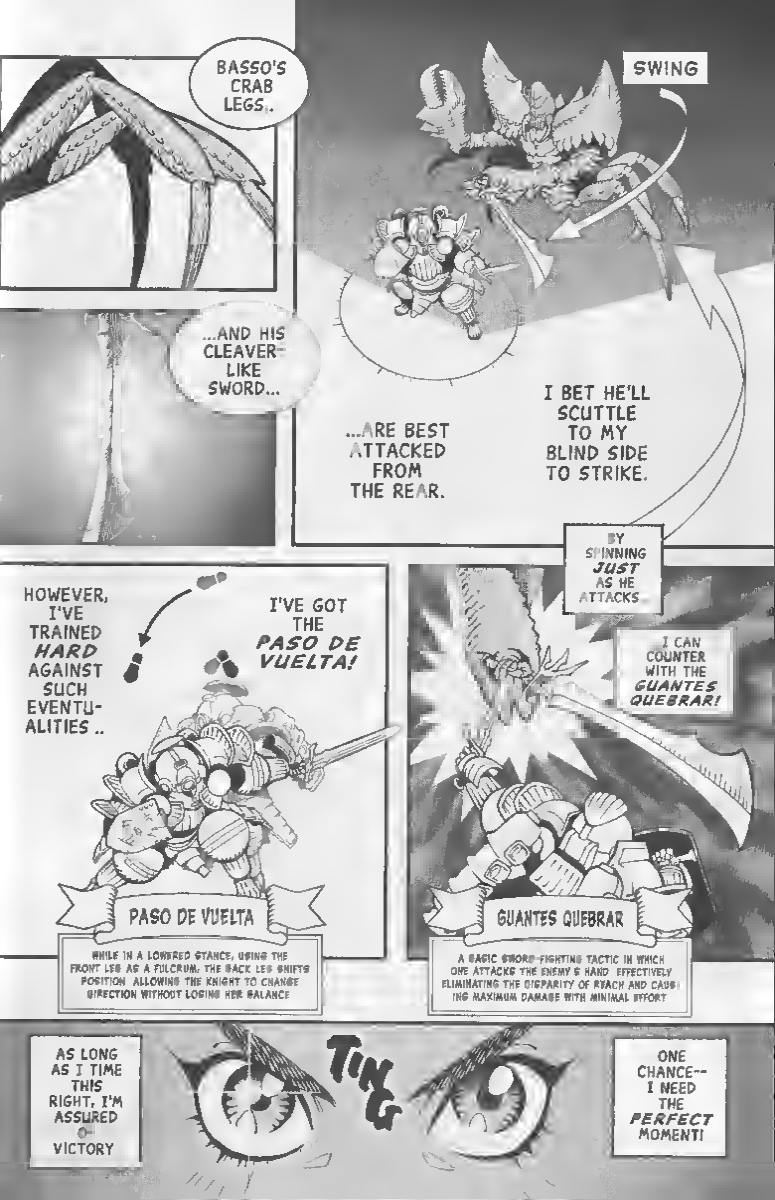
THE BITTER TRIALS OF DESIRE, ACT NINE



CRAB

IN THE SARUPIRALU RELIGION OF MARMUNDO, SHELLED CREATURES SUCH AS CRABS, PRAWNS, AND MUSSELS (WHICH FEED ON DEAD BODIES IN THE SEAS OR BEGIN LIFE AS PARASITES) ARE DESPISED AS SERVANTS OF EVIL. THEY ARE BELIEVED TO BE DEMONS WHO HAVE BEEN STRUCK DOWN BY THE GODS AND TURNED INTO LOWLY CREATURES

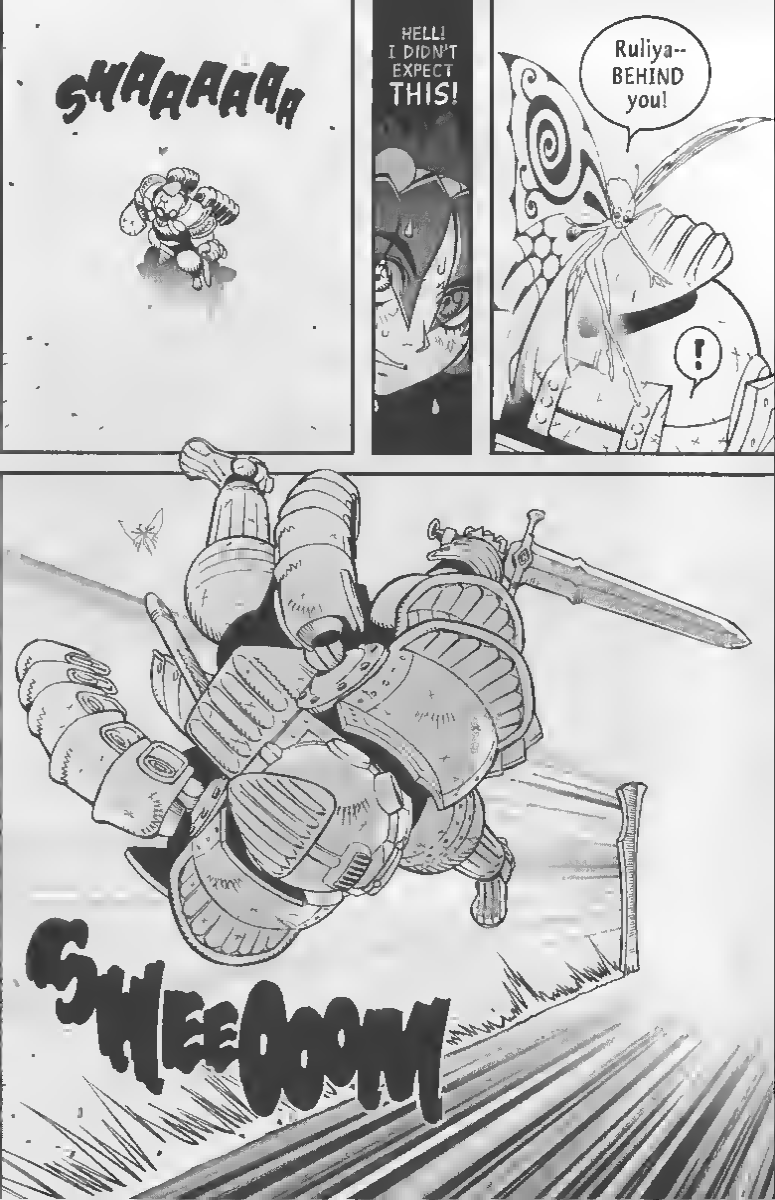

WELL, WELL...
IT WOULD SEEM THAT YOU'RE TOO MUCH FOR MY LACKEYS TO HANDLE.
RULIYA SWIFTLY BEGINS TO STRATEGIZE.
WE'RE ON LAND...
KWK
MY ARMOR IS HEAVY.. AND MY NADAL EXOST APPROACH IS A WATER TECHNIQUE..


BASSO'S CRAB LEGS..
...AND HIS CLEAVER-LIKE SWORD...
SWING
...ARE BEST ATTACKED FROM THE REAR.
I BET HE'LL SCUTTLE TO MY BLIND SIDE TO STRIKE.
HOWEVER, I'VE TRAINED HARD AGAINST SUCH EVENTU-ALITIES ..
I'VE GOT THE PASO DE VUELTA!
PASO DE VUELTA
WHILE IN A LOWERED STANCE, USING THE FRONT LEG AS A FULCRUM, THE BACK LEG SHIFTS POSITION ALLOWING THE KNIGHT TO CHANGE DIRECTION WITHOUT LOSING HER BALANCE
BY SPINNING JUST AS HE ATTACKS...
I CAN COUNTER WITH THE GUANTES QUEBRAR!
GUANTES QUEBRAR
A BASIC SWORD-FIGHTING TACTIC IN WHICH ONE ATTACKS THE ENEMY'S HAND EFFECTIVELY ELIMINATING THE DISPARITY OF REACH AND CAUSING MAXIMUM DAMAGE WITH MINIMAL EFFORT
AS LONG AS I TIME THIS RIGHT, I'M ASSURED OF VICTORY
TING
ONE CHANCE-- I NEED THE PERFECT MOMENT!

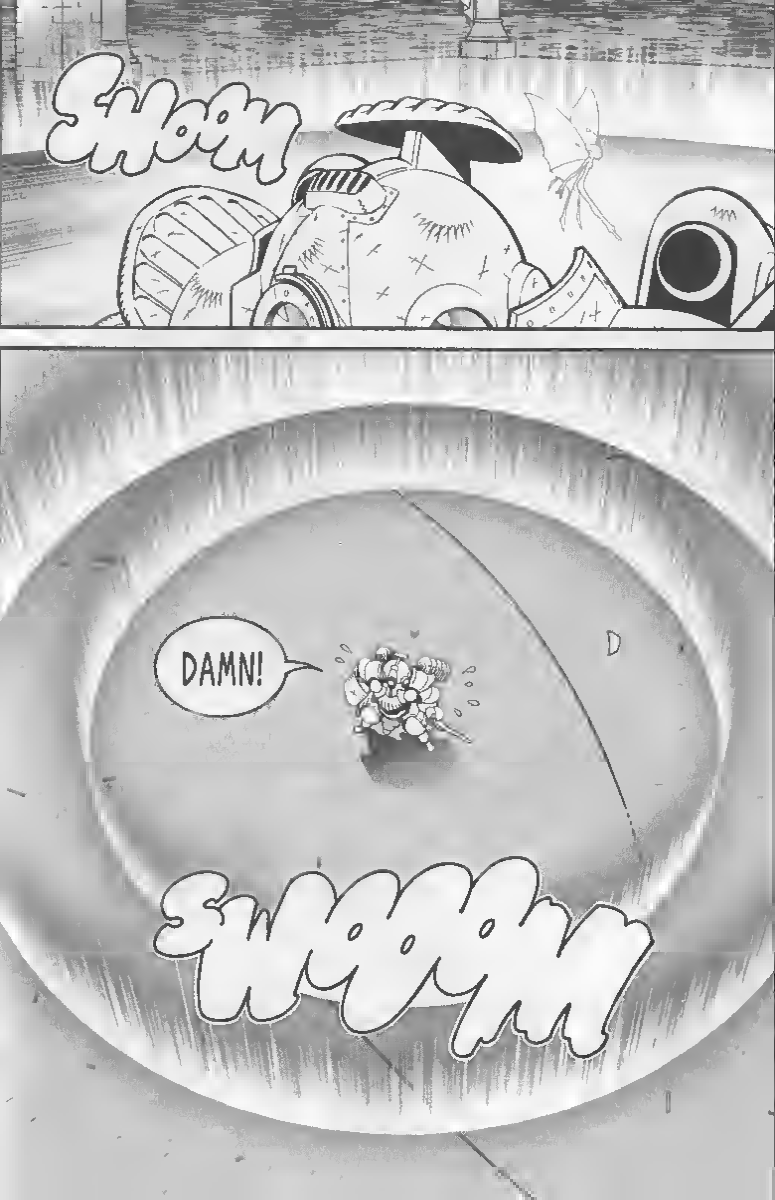
TO BE HONEST, LADY RULIYA, MY SKILLS WITH THE BLADE ARE SECOND CLASS .
. MAYBE MORE LIKE THIRD...
TOOM
WE ALL EXCEL IN WHAT WE ENJOY AND, FRANKLY .
I HATE TO FIGHT.
FIGHTING LEADS TO INJURY AND DEFEAT.
THAT'S WHY I AVOID IT.
I WON'T HEAR YOUR EXCUSES!
IF YOU WANT SOMETHING, YOU HAVE TO FIGHT FOR IT!

BUT FIGHTING IS SO RISKY.
ONE COULD EVEN DIE!
DIDN'T YOUR PARENTS TEACH YOU TNAT FIGHTING IS DANGEROUS?
A KNIGHT MUST PROVE HER COURAGE!
I DO NOT FEAR DEATH!
A TEXTBOOK ANSWER!
PLEASE, DON'T GET ME WRONG...
I'M NOT AVOIDING TNIS BATTLE BECAUSE I'M AFRAID I'LL LOSE. NO, NO, NO, NO, NO!
WITN TNE DEMON SWORD, I'M ASSURED OF VICTORY! BUT...
...IT WOULD BE A SHAME FOR A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN LIKE YOU TO FALL IN BATTLE!

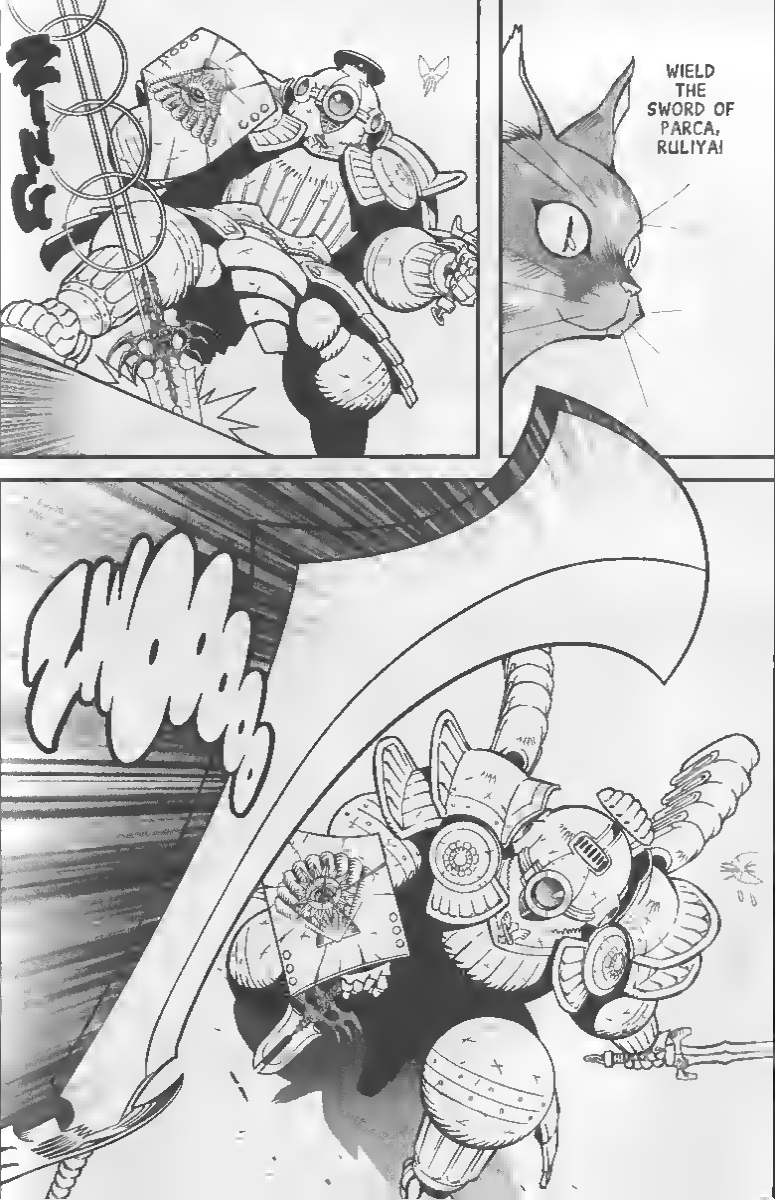
BEING A DEMON IS SO COMPLICATED!
I'M NOT DRIVEN BY A DESIRE TO KILL.
I MERELY WANT TO WIN WITHOUT GETTING MY HANDS DIRTY!
DEMON SWORD GARGORA GEDEJA!
STRIP HER OF HER ARMOR AND WEAPONS, BUT CAUSE HER NO HARM!
WU
GGHAAAA
WH-WHAT!?
GGHHWM


SWAAAAAA
HELL! I DIDN'T EXPECT THIS!
Ruliya-- BEHIND you!
!
SWEEOOOM

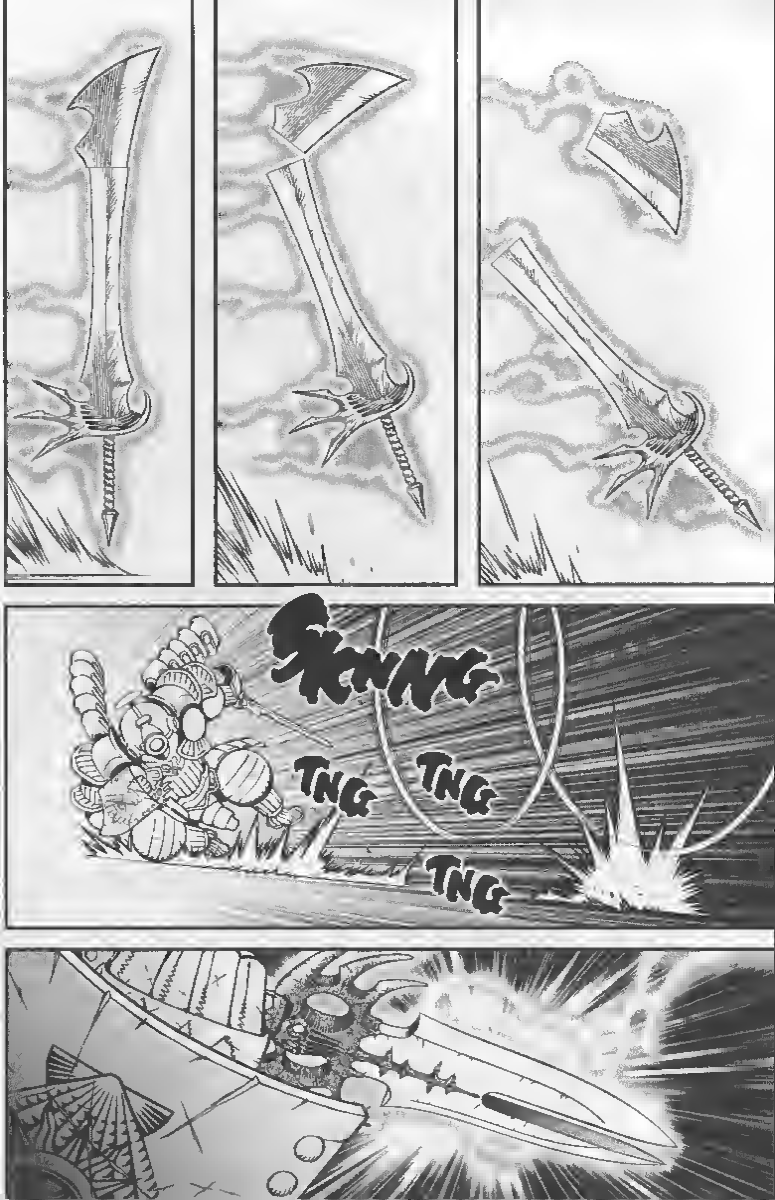
KNK
TNK
SSHHHWM
H-HIS SWORD!
SLICED THROUGH MY SHIELD LIKE A KNIFE THROUGH A JELLYFISH!
I CAN'T PARRY AN ATTACK LIKE THAT!
IF YOU MOVE, YOU MIGHT GET HURT...
HEH HEH HEH
CHEATER!
AH, BUT CHEATING IS MY SPECIALTY.
IT JUST GOES TO SHOW THE HONORABLE CAN NEVER BEAT THE UNSCRUPULOUS!
LET ME SHOW YOU A LIFE OF FREEDOM!
LADY RULIYA, DEFY YOUR DESTINY! REMOVE YOUR ARMOR AND SWORD!


DAMN!

CAN'T USE THE GUANTES QUEBRAR OR MY SHIELD AGAINST IT...!
SO WHAT CAN I DO!?
SHEEOOOM
Ruliya! It's coming!
....!

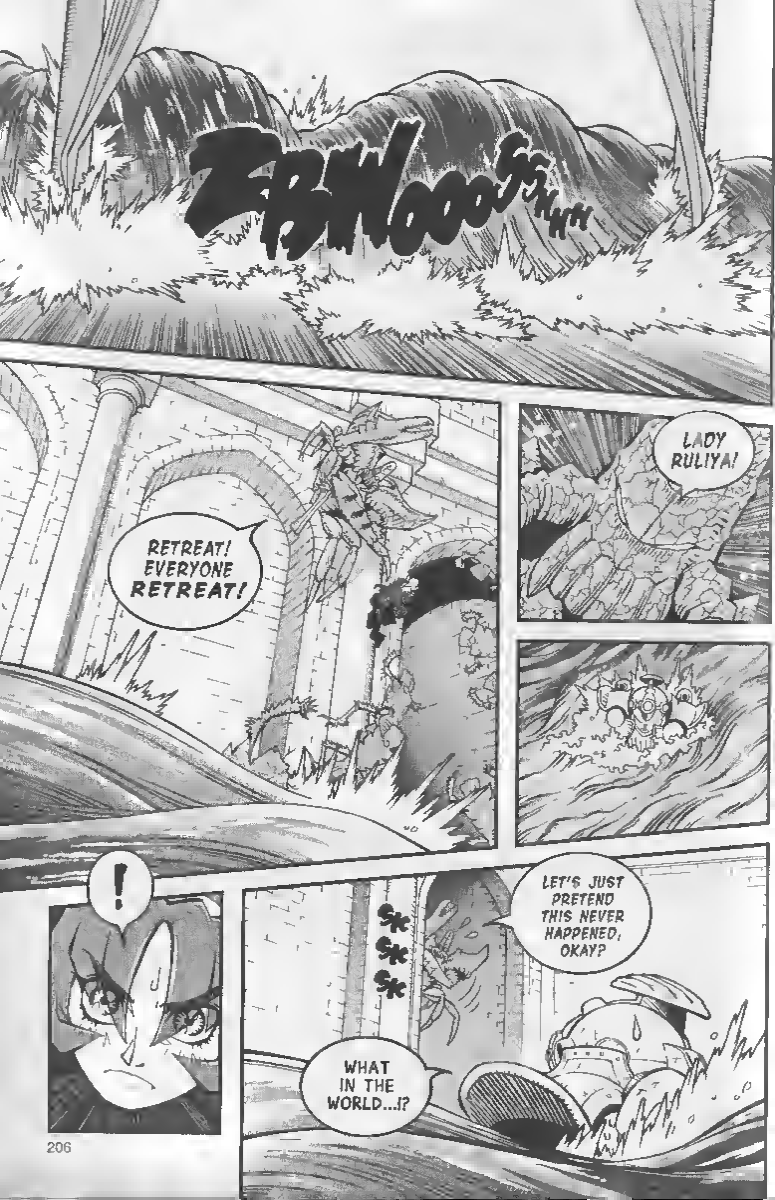

WIELD THE SWORD OF PARCA, RULIYA!

SKATR
NG

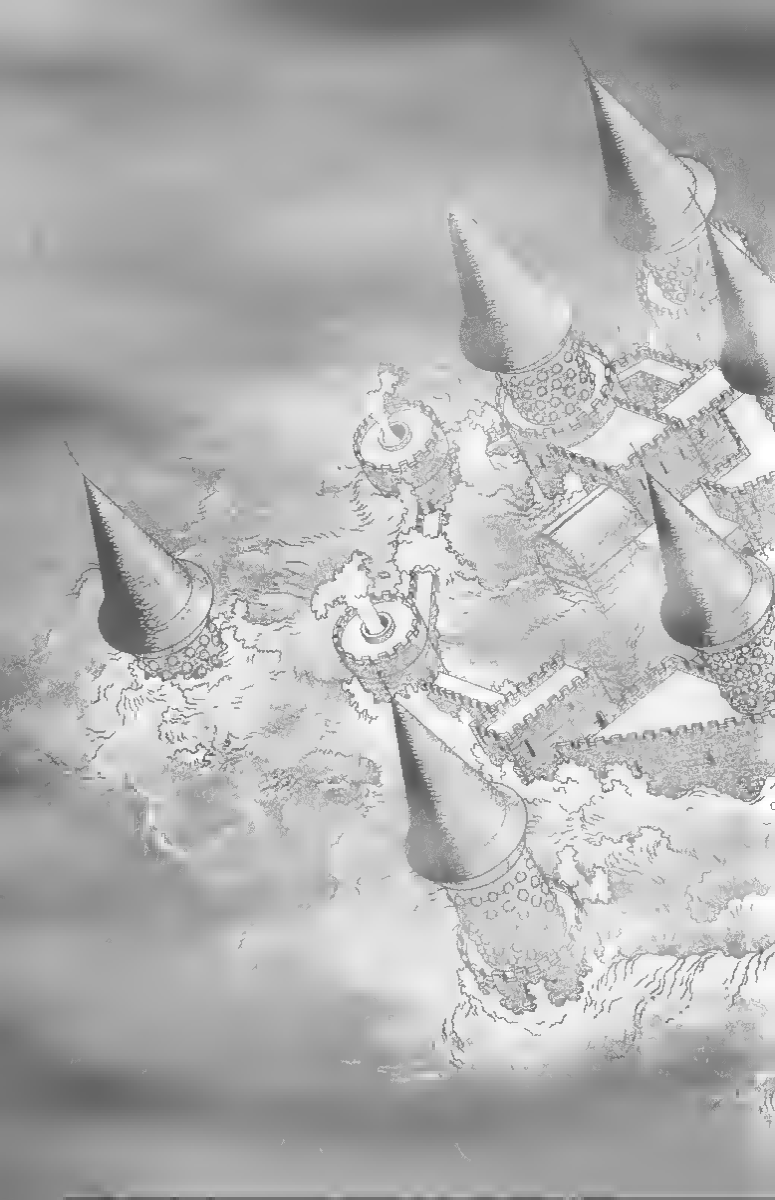

TNG
TNG
TNG

IT CAN'T BE...!
SHREE EEEE EEEEE
EEEEE EEEE EEE EEEK!
!
IT WASN'T A CONSCIOUS CHOICE, BUT AN ACT OF DESPERATION...
THE SHORT SWORD OF PARCA SLICED THROUGH THE ENORMOUS DEMON SWORD AS IF IT WERE A DRIED BRANCH ON A TREE...
I...I WON?

NOOOO OOOO!
MY DEMON SWORD--CUT IN TWO!?
THIS IS WHY I HATE TO FIGHT!
CRIK KREK
SKK
WHY DIDN'T I SEE IT? THIS OUTCOME WAS OBVIOUS!
KRIK
KRIK
NO MATTER HOW POWERFUL THE DEMON SWORD, IT'S STILL A THING OF THE LIVING.
SKRK
HOW COULD IT STAND A CHANCE AGAINST A SWORD OF DEATH!?
HE KNEW! THE DEATH KNIGHT KNEW THIS WOULD BE THE OUTCOME!
RMB
RMB


FRIWOOOSHH
RETREAT! EVERYONE RETREAT!
LADY RULIYA!
!
LET'S JUST PRETEND THIS NEVER HAPPENED, OKAY?
SHK SHK SHK
WHAT IN THE WORLD...!?

SPLASH
YOU SHOULD GET OUT OF HERE AS WELL.
Mr. Cat?
THE MAGICAL BALANCE HAS BEEN UPSET.
THIS CASTLE WILL SINK INTO THE OCEAN...
Why did you help Ruliya?
I thought you were on THEIR side..
THE DEMON SWORD MUST NEVER PASS INTO THE WRONG HANDS.
IT IS MY DUTY TO SEE TO THAT!
AND THOUGH IT HAS BEEN BROKEN, ITS FATE IS NOT YET SEALED
Thank you, Mr Cat



THUSCHAA

SCENE TWENTY-THREE: UNDERWORLD FRIEND

AFTER THE CASTLE SANK ..
. .THE FOG SWIFTLY DISPERSED, AS IF IT HAD NEVER EXISTED.
I *DID* IT...!
MY FIRST LIFE-OR-DEATH BATTLE...
...AND AGAINST THE RENOWNED *DEMON KNIGHT*, TOO!
THE SWORD OF PARCA...

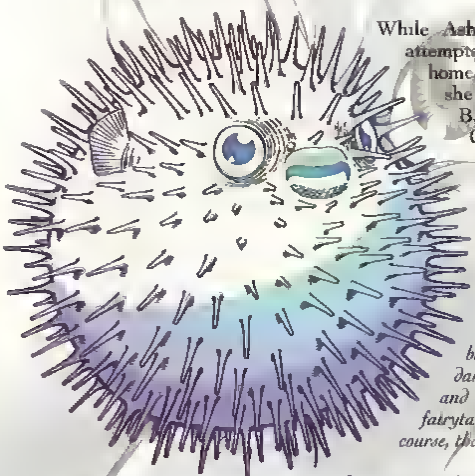
Is it me, or has that thing CHANGED?
NO...
THIS IS DEFINITELY MY SWORD MUERTOGARA.
RULIYA ACCEPTS THE CHANGE, AS IF IT WAS ALWAYS SO...

...HER MIND AWASH WITH THE NAMES AND FACES OF THOSE WHO HAVE AIDED HER ON HER JOURNEY.
EVEN ON THIS MOMENTOUS DAY--NOT HAVING FULLY COMPREHENDED THE KNIGHT OF PARCA'S WORDS--SHE STILL FEARS DEATH...
BUT SHE HAS, AT LAST, RESOLVED TO *HAVE FAITH* IN HER DESTINY--AND TO *TRUST* THE SWORD OF DEATH
PERHAPS IT WAS THIS TRANSFORMATION IN *HER* THAT CAUSED THE TRANSFORMATION IN THE *SWORD*...

LET'S GO!
IT'S TIME TO RESCUE ASHIKA AND THE LIGHT SPHERE!
RULIYA'S JOURNEY HAS JUST BEGUN..
TO BE CONTINUED..

On a mystical aqueous world, noble Aqua Knight Ruhya is marooned on a remote island inhabited only by Arrabarus the lighthouse keeper, his naive young son Ashika, and Niselle, a mysterious sphere of light that Ashika takes to be his mother.

In return for saving her life, Aqua Knight Ruhya pledges to make Ashika her squire. But all too soon, the tranquil idyll of the island is shattered by the arrival of nefarious inventor Alcantara and the bizarre crew of his air/watership. Now Arrabarus has been escorted to the underworld, Ruhya has received the gift of a demon-conjuring blade named "Muertogara," and Alcantara has kidnapped hapless Ashika and the precious light!



While Ashika desperately and ineptly attempts to escape his unhappy new home, Ruhya is in hot pursuit—until she is waylaid by thieving Count Basso and his evil wizard Chakuda, who connive to enter the dreamscape of her psyche to pry into the secrets of her childhood and discern her greatest weakness!

Can even the legions of Hell save Ruhya now...!?

"There's literally no comparison between Yukito Kishiro's complex, dark cyberpunk Battle Angel Alita *and the simple (like an angel) heroic fairytale that's* Aqua Knight. *Except, of course, that both are great in every aspect."*

—Comic Buyer's Guide

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